

https://dspace.org/

The invisible image: a study on animated representation in the adaptation of the Bible

Vav Rooyen, Rachel

2019

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/29341

van Rooyen, Rachel Renee, (2019). The invisible image :a study on animated representation in the adaptation of the Bible, University of the Witwatersrand, https://hdl.handle.net/10539/29341

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

MASTER OF ARTS IN DIGITAL ARTS: ANIMATION

WSOA 8000

The Invisible Image: A Study on Animated Representation in the Adaptation of the Bible

MASTERS DISSERTATION

RACHEL VAN ROOYEN

687203

SUPERVISOR: RAYMOND WHITCHER

13 SEPTEMBER 2019

ETHICS CLEARANCE PROTOCOL NO.: WSOA180306

THE SON IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD, THE FIRSTBORN OVER ALL CREATION

COLOSSIANS 1:15 NIV

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. Proper accreditation has been given to all outside sources.

This report has not been submitted to another university or institution of higher learning. No part of this report has been published in any journals or social media.

Rachel van Rooyen

Student Name

687203

Student Number

_____

Signed

on this day 13th of September 2019

ABSTRACT

The adaptation of the Bible into visual media has been practiced for centuries. To find out why visual adaptation techniques were used for biblical accounts into animation, this paper compares panel-based image story-telling techniques against those of animation. It does so by providing an in-depth analysis of the representational processes involved for animation to communicate meaning, namely Roland Barthes's photographic *Connotation Procedures* in relation to Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston's principles of animation, and Foucault's discussion of discourse.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration 3

Abstract 4

Chapter 1: Introduction – Art History and Judeo-Christian Text 6

1.1 - Introduction 6

1.2 – Contextualising Art History and the Bible 8

1.3 – Stylised Media: Still vs. Moving 13

Chapter 2: Animation and Meaning-Making 23

2.1: Semiotics 23

2.2 Discourse 52

Chapter 3: The Bible and Visual Adaptation Studies 59

Chapter 4: Animation and The Bible – Case Study Analysis 63

4.1 – Case Study 1: Moses and Rameses. the Same, but Different 65

4.2 – Case Study Two: Playing with the Big Boys Now 70

4.3 – Case Study Conclusions 74

Chapter 5: Conclusion 76

Glossary of Terms 79

Appendix I 80

Appendix II 90

Works Cited 93

List of Images 98

List of Tables 101

Acknowledgements 102

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION – ART HISTORY AND JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TEXT

1.1 - INTRODUCTION

Scripture is central to Christian belief. And yet it has been globally proliferated in image-based media. From the decorative to instructional, to the comic and profane, scripture has been adapted again and again to the image, and an iconographic language has developed from it. The historic Church at first avoided icon, but have since used image-based media to illustrate accounts from the Bible. This practice has not ceased since. And while we consider words and images two divorced media, in biblical art, they are not as disparate as they may seem. The image and scriptural text bear a strong relationship, and both are equally important in historical representation of biblical narrative. They share the same space and bear the same weight in the artistic portrayal of the Bible (Jevtic). Historically, the biblical image would appear alongside the text it was illustrating. Nowadays, the adapted image is movement-based and spoken word narration has taken up the burden of contextualisation of the image.

I am studying panel-based image story-telling techniques against those of animation, in order to find out why those visual adaptation techniques were used for biblical accounts so that my reader can see the significance of the long-established relationship between scripture and its visual adaptation, and how this led to its adaptation into animation due to its use of semiotics and gesture as communicators to its audience, and the representational devices inherent in the medium.

These representational devices in animation are analysed by means of semiotics and discourse, in order to answer the research question: why is the Bible adapted so often into the animated medium? Can the Bible be adapted into visual media? What are the benefits to using a movement-based visual medium like animation?

To help with this investigation, this paper overviews how biblical literature is adapted into visual media – specifically animation for the purposes of this research – by using visual and

textual adaptation theory which is then applied to moving-image based media, namely the animated feature. Is there such a thing as a 'true to source' adaptation? What changes, if any, were made into the visual adaptation from the source material?

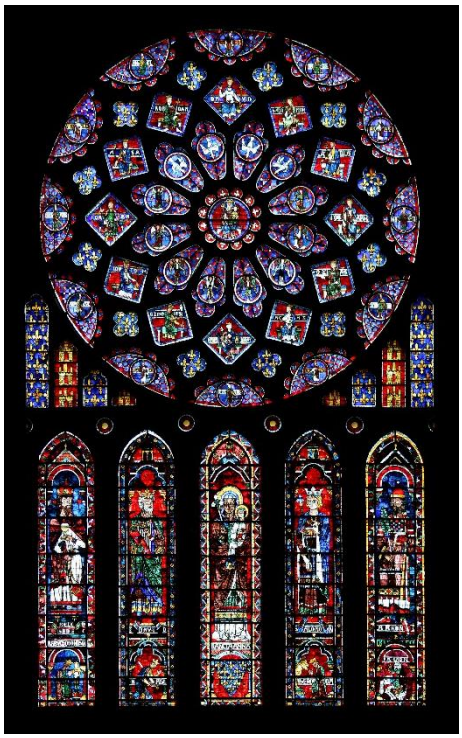


Figure 1: North transept stained glass window of Chatres Cathedral depicting the glorification of the Virgin Mary photographed by Guillaume Piolle. 1235. Chartres Cathedral, Chartres. (Wikimedia, 2009). Stained Glass Window.

The purpose of this paper is not to evaluate historical style, as style is impacted by cultural influences and is often shared across religious sects of the time. Style in each artistic movement is neither uniform nor unique to Judeo-Christian art, but subject matter is (Weitzmann, *Introduction* 1-2). However, I will be comparing the use of stylistic mediums against those of live-action in their respective modes of realism. This paper intends to track the visual adaptation and narrative techniques of biblical accounts through two case studies from DreamWorks Studios *The Prince of Egypt* (1998).

This paper also reviews the different ontologies of various visual media, as animation is a stylised medium that is also influenced by other visual media an understanding of differing visual ontologies is therefore important. I have chosen to explore adaptation in this medium because there is a fair amount of animated scriptural content and I want to specifically investigate the use of the animated medium in illustrating scripture.

These questions are not about pitting one form of medium over the other (still vs. moving), but to ask why was it used? And what does each medium bring to the portrayal of scripture? And why choose that medium? What are the advantages of using that medium?

I am asking these questions because I want to investigate this animated content from the medium's perspective rather than a theological or cultural studies one. I hope that in pursuing this direction of study I will be exploring the potential application of animation in adaptation theory. Animation has a long history of adaptation from literature as mentioned by Desmond and Hawkes in *Adaptation: Studying Film & Literature* (2006), and by analysing the

tools for communication inherent in the very Principles of Animation described by Ollie Johnston and Frank Thomas, I hope to shed light on the strength of the medium for adaptation.[1]

1.2 – CONTEXTUALISING ART HISTORY AND THE BIBLE

Historically, art was an expression of religion, in all cultures globally, or utilised art in all the formal places of worship. Artisans sculpted images of deities, painted murals in places of worship, carved alters and embroidered partitions in temples as James Elkins explains in *On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art* (2004). Particularly within Christianity, religious art can be traced from murals in an underground church in Rome as early as the third century. As explained by Kurt Weitzmann in his preface and introduction to *Age of Spirituality: A Symposium* (1980) the window between the resurrection of Jesus and early Christian art is due to the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire that only ended in 311 A.D., and Christianity was only legalised in 313. The early church's interpretation of the second commandment, "You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea" (New Living Translation. Ex 20:4), contributed to the lack of art produced too as they were concerned that the creation of the image of God may create an *image* of worship. But once the church had adopted the Greek art forms of the time to spread the Gospel in "pictorial language" Christian art became far more prolific (vii-2). In adopting these Greek techniques, Christian artworks tended toward two broad categories: the icon and narrative imagery (Weitzmann, *Introduction* 1-5). Those works in the iconographic category required some understanding of church rhetoric to understand who, what, or which place was being depicted. The narratological works, however, remained linked with the biblical word. While the use of icons still permeates these works, the closeness of the text within them "establishes a closer visual-verbal interaction, even a kind of equivalence between them. Both image and written words play their distinct role in the representation; they share the task of

[1] For a full list and breakdown of the Principles of Animation, see Appendix I on page 80.

communicating the narrative", as expressed by Ivana Jevtic in her paper "Narrative Mode in Late Byzantine Painting: Questions it Raises about Sacred Images" (2013).

Jevtic highlights the problematic tendency in academic studies of ancient Christian art tend to focus only on pictorial qualities, and avoids observation on the narrative devices used by the artists in both text and image. Both Jevtic and Weitzmann discuss the structures used in Classical and Byzantine Christian narrative art like narrative cycles, dramatic staging, gesture and facial expression and how they link to the modern cinematic style (Weitzmann, *Narration in Early Christendom* 84).

The adoption of the cult icon from the Greco-Roman tradition into Christian medium necessitates understanding of semiotics and iconography, especially as this practice still permeates Christian and secular media today, from the devout to the kitsch, and the profane. This paper will be using Roland Barthes's *Connotation Procedures* as explained in his book *Image Music Text* (1977) as semiotic toolkit for image-message analyses, and Stuart Hall's *The Work of Representation* (1997).

The Image and the Word



Figure 2: Rembrandt van Rjin, "Christ in the Storm in the Sea of Galilee" (1633). Painting.

The production of Judeo-Christian image-based media has since continued – most famously in the Renaissance – until the 19th century. The practice continued, but within fine art a distinct shift from religious material began with the Romantics and early Expressionism (Elkins 5-8). By the arrival of Modernism in the early 20th century there was a profound rift between religious art and contemporary art in the art world, due its "sincer[ity]" and "[lack of] irony", which according to Elkins, is outside the concerns of postmodern work (47). Mircea Eliade in his paper *The Sacred and the Modern Artist* (1984) explains it in a far more gentler and encompassing manner: that the art of the 20th century onward is not

concerned with "traditional religious imagery and symbolism" but that it still deals with the sacred which is "unrecognisable … because it is no longer expressed in a conventional religious language" (180). Since my research focuses on the use of *visual media* in Judeo-Christian content – specifically animation – this paper will not touch on what is and is not considered "art". Additionally, animation has a history of blurring commercial and elitist conceptions of "art" as Bill Mikulak chronicles in his paper *Disney and the Art World: The Early Years* (2009) (111).

The Bible makes use of extensive metaphor and descriptive language, thus making the text quite visual in nature. The most visual of its books of course being the poetry and prophetic books like Song of Solomon and Isaiah, respectively. But even the historical texts, gospels and epistles are each interwoven with visual metaphors in their accounts and explanations, and heavy emphasis is placed upon the actions of the individuals and societies recorded in the Bible and their impact upon the generations to follow. In his paper *The Aesthetic Dimensions in Theology* (1984) Thomas Franklin O'Meara also relates the importance of visual representations of theology, because they are creative forms. Biblical texts "are rarely those of logic and law. These texts, and the Jesus they record, teach through imagination's forms: parables, stories, paradoxes, confrontations, dramas, hymns, gospels and letters." (211) It is these two factors of the Bible – intense imagery and focus on action – that I believe lend themselves well to the adaptation into animation as it is a highly interpretive medium. The Bible also accounts miracles and supernatural phenomena (Figure 2) that usually require computer-generated visual effects and animation to illustrate in film-based media. A fair amount of Christian art has been used to teach, like the stained-glass windows of the Cathedral Chartres that illiterate congregants would meditate on the life of Jesus (The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica) (Figure 1). What is of interest to my research is the translation from still visual mediums to animation in the church to educate parishioners in alternative methods of worship. Ideally, the

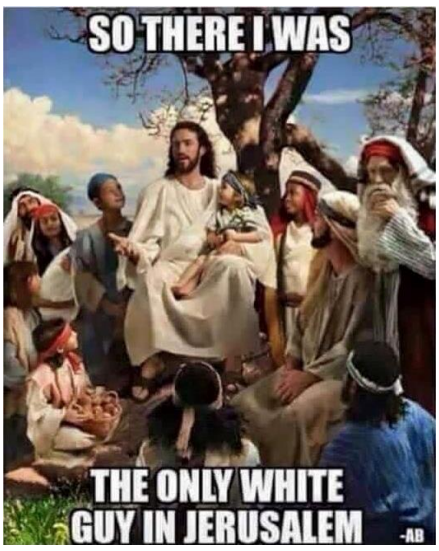


Figure 3: Story Time Jesus is one of the many examples of memetic Jesus from: Meme Generator. memegenerator.net, 31 Oct. 2017. Internet meme.

translation should potentially be able to occur across cultural and religious practises, making its methods transcendent of its medium.

Jesus in Pop-Culture



Figure 4: An ungrateful Jesus opens his Christmas/birthday present from God from Mark Kirkland (dir.), Season 26, Episode 9: "I Won't Be Home for Christmas", *The Simpsons* (Fox Broadcasting Company, 1989 – present). Animated Series.



Figure 5: The creature Lilith hangs crucified beneath a laboratory from Hideaki Anno (dir.), *Evangelion: 1.0 You Are (Not) Alone* (Studio Khara, 2007). Animated Film.

Though artistic works may use religious content, their intent is not necessarily religious. These secularised interpretations are not new, art has used biblical content and icons for various intents and statements – particularly in the postmodern age – to the point where Jesus has his own collection of memes (Figure 3).[2] These depictions of Jesus in modern culture range from the parodic and stereotypical, to the profane (Figure 4 and Figure 5 respectively). As such the use of his modern image exemplifies Roland Barthes's theory of the "mythic" in his book *Mythologies* (1972). Traditionally, according the Saussurian model of semiotics, the relation between a signifier and its signified is arbitrary, which Barthes's semiology was built upon. But Barthes's mythology explained a specific use of signs in media where the original character and intent of a signifier is drained from it and then resignified – becoming doubly signified (Barthes, *Mythologies* 114-115). This second phase of signification is that connotation of Jesus which is most useful to audience and their purposes for his image, because myth is "full on one side and empty on the other" (Barthes, *Mythologies* 117), this emptiness allowing for the repurposing, as reiterated by Macat in their YouTube video analysis "An Introduction to Roland Barthes's Mythologies - A Macat Literature Analysis" (2015).

[2] According to CollinsDictionary.com: "an idea or element of social behaviour passed on through generations in a culture, especially by imitation".

The Gospels and Epistles of the Bible are abundantly clear on the love of Christ, but also on the dedication to justice and unselfish love that he displayed and expected of his followers. Since loving one's neighbour more than oneself is often costly and inconvenient – to love one's enemy even more so – Jesus's character and words would need to be nullified and repackaged to be made less dangerous or volatile (Macat 00:03:04-00:03:17). The potential for his gospel to cause discomfort is made stagnant and therefore becomes more "safe", because his image is now controlled (Macat 00:03:04-00:03:12). The sign – Jesus – is no longer arbitrary but motivated by its user. In the case of Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* (2013), Jesus is portrayed in every race and at various ages at an Easter celebration, as a commentary on the general Whitewashing of Jesus by Western culture.[3] And since humans love to assign their own identity to things, this includes the face of Jesus so that he is familiarised to them, and there is literally a Jesus for everybody. Not only is Jesus made plural, but they are all said to be so "nice". The nature of Jesus's message and character is diluted and repackaged to being generally pleasant to everyone. Therefore, his image can be manipulated to suit any cultural or populist narrative. This obfuscates the spiritual cost involved in the decision to follow him and his teachings (Macat 00:02:50-00:03:04).

This argument may be slightly speculative on my part, simply because this is how I perceive the use of the image of Jesus, and my interpretation according to Barthes's mythology. Others may have interpreted his representation in a different manner.



Figure 6: CinemaSins (dir.), remarks upon the parallels between the character Caesar and with that of Jesus from "Everything Wrong With War For The Planet Of The Apes" (2017). YouTube video.

[3] According to CollinsDictionary.com: "to cast a White actor in the role of (a character from a minority ethnic group) or to produce (a film or play) using White actors to play characters from a minority ethnic group".

The continued resignification of Jesus's image in popular culture is not the only site of resignification of biblical figures and accounts. Both animation and live-action are utilised to illustrate the stories of the prominent figures of the Bible (Figure 7), but a fair amount of what is considered secular cinema also makes reference to and parallels with elements from the Bible both in visuals and story elements (Figure 6). The use of these story elements is explored in chapter 3, which is dedicated the adaptation of visual media from the Bible. A full analysis on the use of semiotics and communication of meaning in animation will be done in the chapter 2.



Figure 7: Adam and Eve sleep in the Garden of Eden from William R. Kowalchuk (dir.), *Greatest Heroes and Legends of the Bible: The Garden of Eden* (Vivendi Entertainment, 2000). Animated Film.

1.3 – STYLISED MEDIA: STILL VS. MOVING

This paper intends to track the use of mediums for visual adaptation in Judeo-Christian art by utilising adaptation theory – both visual and textual – and the use of semiotics to convey meaning through the consideration of line, shape, layout and colour, and the visual devices used in such works to convey narrative and meaning. I chose this approach as the impact of line, shape and colour in the animated tradition are among the key principles of animation – as outlined by Ollie Johnston and Frank Thomas in *The Illusion of Life* (1981). They are also the chief considerations discussed about animation's aesthetics in academic writing; by bringing attention to the shift from still-image to moving-image based media I hope to highlight the

importance of animation as a powerful medium for adaptation. The still-image can only "suggest what happened just before, or what will happen after that particular moment has passed" (Thomas and Johnston 13) through the quality of line, shape and colour, gesture, and perhaps a caption. In animation, however, context and information are transmitted through movement that employs those same elements. This is the potency of the animated medium. As Johnston and Thomas put it:

> There is a new excitement to the familiar elements of drawing and design when they are shown heroic size on a large screen, but, more than that, the addition of movement opens the way to almost unlimited new relationships in all areas … Add to this the potential for building colour relationships in sequence for stronger emotional response, and the artist has before him an incredible medium for self-expression. (15)

The use of sequential image art – e.g. comics, hieroglyphs, narratological murals – provides an interesting middle ground that parallels well with the use of animation as a medium. There is a deep history of pictorial story-telling across global cultures, which Scott McCloud overviews in his book *Understanding Comics* (1994). According to his definition of a comic,[4] the stained-glass window shown in Figure 1 and the Catholic fourteen stations are included due to their reliance upon sequence in understanding what is being conveyed by the artist. This definition also marries well with the visual and textual narrative devices used in biblical art that both Weitzmann and Jevtic have identified. Weitzmann describing second century drawings placed between sections of text in biblical papyri were utilising comic techniques to:

> stress moving actions, usually from left to right in such a way that the beholder is induced to move from one scene to the next just as his eyes read consecutive lines of writing. It was already the ancient illustrator's aim to establish a sequence of phases as close together as possible so that the beholder may read a picture story without resorting to the text for understanding the essential features of a plot. Here we see a new principle in its nascent state which in our own days has developed into the motion picture. (Weitzmann, *Narration in Early Christendom* 84)

The issue of comparing the still against moving image lies in their differing ontologies, according to Sean Cubitt in his paper *Visual and audiovisual: from image to moving image* (2002), and Pascal Lefèvre's *Incompatible Visual Ontologies?* (2007). Cubitt states that stillness

[4] "Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequences, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer". (McCloud 9)

is in fact a special case, that movement is natural and stillness is not due to its temporal quality. Because "if an image is a discrete, autonomous object, how can it 'move'? Movement implies two qualities that are not proper to the image: that it enters a necessary relation with other images, and a necessary relation with the *hors-champ*, the off-screen space, with what is not imaged." (359) This interaction with the off-screen space is a deliberate story-telling technique taken advantage of in film, and is what McCloud refers to as "closure" (63). The viewer's ability to perform closure in animation is both physical and involuntary; this is done by interpreting the projected image at 24 frames per second – conventionally – into a continuous image. The viewer then relies upon their experiences to interpret audio-visual cues provided by the film-maker and make meaning from them. In Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), the Queen's obvious delight in watching Snow White as she eats the apple off-screen, to then have the apple tumble from Snow White's hand tells the audience enough to know that the poison has been effective.

Cubitt's argument is that moving images that are not to be considered individual images, but rather that the unit of movement is the entire "succession of frames" comprising it (363). When studying animation, this approach makes sense as animators speak of animating *sequences* of movement to combine them into a *scene*. In terms of Johnston and Thomas's principles of *pose to pose or straight ahead action* and *follow through and overlapping action*, sequences are animated until the scene is complete or the main poses of a single sequence are drawn and then the in-betweens are animated. In both cases, all the frames comprising a movement are considered by animators as a unit, especially when comparing poses in pose-to-pose animation, one assesses the initial and final poses for the strength of the overall movement. And even then, these movements are influenced by *follow through and overlapping action*, where Johnston and Thomas themselves admit that within this principle "no one really knew where one ended and the other began" (59). Barthes refers to the interpretation of image sequences as "Syntax" in his *Connotation Procedures* (*Image Music Text* 24). Cubitt furthers his argument by stating the moving image is audio-visual since it is temporal. By contrast, the still-image is not since it cannot visualise sounds nor music. However, some modern artists were preoccupied with achieving just that. Specifically, Wassily Kandinsky strove to visualise music in his paintings, his writings about which influenced Modernist animators to produce a practice known as Visual Music (Furniss, *A New History of*

Animation 71). In one such text, *Point and Line to Plane* (1982), he wrote how the work of modernists were causing the distinction between painting and music, "[two] formerly divided realms of art from one another" to be far less distinct (549-550). His processes to "provoke the five senses" through the use of shape, line, and colour to portray both sensation and inner thought is sited by McCloud as among those fine artists that influenced comics in developing its own visual language (123).

On the subject of time in still-media, McCloud expands upon the potential of comics to conflate and manipulate time outside of a linear progression within a single comic panel. The portrayal and manipulation of time in comics is also an inherent trait in the medium. What is more is the interactive element in comic reading, and indeed viewing any still-image. A reader may choose the pace at which the panels and sequences are read, but also revisit them. The use of panels in comics – or lack thereof – can even create a sense of timelessness. But image sequences can also be arranged outside of a linear progression, they may guide the reader in several different bends of time on a page, or even bend time around itself and create a cyclical structure (McCloud 105-106). In contrast, a film compels viewer to watch sequences at the rhythm it was edited to be, and in a totally linear sequence (Lefèvre 5-6). While in cinema, the choice of timing is enforced upon the viewer, there are means of manipulating timing, and timing is of fundamental importance in animation.

> In general, the element of time can be recognised to a far greater extent in the case of line than in that of point – extension being a temporal concept. On the other hand, the course of a straight line is, temporally speaking, different from that of a curve, even if they are of the same length, and the more agitated a curved line is, the greater is its extension in time. There exist, therefore, in line manifold possibilities of exploiting time. (Kandinsky 617)

"In, geometry, line is an invisible entity. It is the trail left by the point in motion. Hence it comes about through movement – indeed, by destroying the ultimately self-contained repose of the point. Here we have a leap from the static to the dynamic." (Kandinsky 572)

"A comic becomes 'real' when time and timing is factored into the creation. In graphics the experience [of time] is conveyed by the use of illusions and symbols and their arrangement." (Eisner 24). The same could be said for animation, which is explored further is section 2.1 in the following chapter.

The differences in visual ontologies of still-images and moving images can be further explored by comic adaptation theory and why they plague the adaption of comics into film. One of the problems Lefèvre outlines is that the translation of drawings into photography, where the unique stylisation of the comic is lost in the adaptation to live-action. Once more animation's unique potential as a medium allows it to share qualities with those of still-media. Due to its sequential nature, it shares much with comics and sequential arts, however, is not sequenced by *space* but in fact by *time*. As such, in animation stylisation is preserved and "viewers tend to accept more from a stylised medium than a photographic [one]" (Lefèvre 9). This is reiterated in John M. Desmond and Peter Hawkes's book *Adaptation: Studying Film & Literature* (2006), stating that "animation contributes to adaptation in a way live-action films cannot" due to their use of "exaggerated and embellished forms, their intensified colours and their distorted sounds" – again referring to the *principles of animation*. It is the employment of these techniques in animation that "[transform] a literary text in a way not seen in live-action films" (Desmond and Hawkes 210) and "creates a world similar to magic realism, where the divisions between the possible and impossible are erased" (Desmond and Hawkes 227). The authors praise animation's use of exaggeration in all aspects of the production design, highlighting specifically its use in character design and how it visually cues the audience to the character's personality and relationship to their setting – this we know as the principle of appeal in a character (Thomas and Johnston 65-69).

Animation's use of exaggeration also lends itself to the adaptation of stylistic visual mediums rather than photographic ones, where realistic portrayal is suspended for one of realism. An example of the use of appeal and exaggeration is in DreamWorks' *The Prince of Egypt* (1998) in which the characters of Moses and Rameses were always dressed in red and blue respectively. It was an effective technique to physically distinguish the two characters in the beginning of the film where they are both Egyptian princes, but then to enhance their complete separation from one another both spiritually and in agenda by the end of the film. This separation is reiterated throughout film not only in the two princes, but in their respective birthplaces. Moses is first introduced to the audience as a baby exiting the red mud Hebrew dwellings of Goshen, his family rushing to save him from Pharaoh Seti's order to kill every Hebrew baby boy, making the audience sympathetic to their suffering.

In semiotics, Moses's association with red is read as warmth against the cold and deadly Egyptians when he enters their cool, architectural and ordered palace; however, it also signifies the deaths of the young Hebrew boys as ordered by Pharaoh Seti, the man Moses believed to be his father. It is a subtle but effective means of reminding the audience of Moses's 'otherness' among the Egyptians. Later his association with red signifies another blood sacrifice: that of the Passover lamb which protects the Hebrews from retribution at the hands of the Angel of Death, claiming the firstborn among the Egyptians.



Figure 8: The distinguishing red and blue details of Moses and Rameses from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film.

Continuing the discussion of animation as a medium, being filmic, it shares the "relation to other images" (Cubitt 359) with live-action, but has fewer issues in adaptation because it also is a *stylised* medium. Film is in the diegetic space, but animation and comics are inherently parodic (Lefèvre 2) and both intentionally draw attention to the fact that they are *created* images. Their fabrication is implicit in their appeal. According to Paul Atkinson in his article *Movements within Movements* (2009), the process of crafting the image causes it to be "marked by the gestural movement of the artist … The line still carries with it the movement immanent to its own production" (269), consequently generating animation's "simulation of identity in movement" (267). This process stands in contrast to that of photography where out of "the plenitude of a visual field" the photographer chooses what to include or exclude from the shot (Atkinson 269). In filmic terms, the principle photography is shot in advance of its editing into scenes, but in sequential art the production of panels and their arrangement are difficult to divorce from one another. But since both the animated and the photographic

images are constructed images –[5] the animated one more so – both invariably endow the image with constructed meaning. This is one of several *Connotation Procedures* as described by Roland Bathes in his book *Image Music Text* (1977). The changing of the position panels, their size, and the number of panels have an impact on how they are interpreted by the reader because "choices in one domain have consequences in the other domain" (Lefèvre 6). Further still, the sense of movement and the element of time in comics impact these choices in page composition – and thus their interpreted meaning. As stated by McCloud, "the composition of the picture is joined by the composition of change, the composition of drama – and the composition of memory" (115).

Stylised mediums' appeal in storytelling is that by privileging the "idea of form" the cartoon then "places itself in the world of concepts", because the physical domain in the medium is purposefully "de-emphasis[ed]" in appearance, allowing for the cartoon to express "the world *within*" (McCloud 41) – that of concepts, dreams, the subconscious, and emotion. This is something Robert Feild [sic] had written about in 1942, as Ester Leslie briefly explores in her paper *it's* [*sic*] *Mickey Mouse* (2009). Feild [*sic*] noted this as animation's "[appeal to] the imagination" because it "has the ability to overcome the limitations of time and space to which we are normally subjected", succinctly stating that "what is Mickey anyway but an abstract idea in the process of becoming?" (24). This "process of becoming" is what Leslie explores as animation's ability to bridge between intellect and imagination to expand beyond the "restrictions of the physical world" and conclude that "philosophy and animation unearth each other" (24). All of which are properties that appealed to Modernist artists in the early 20th century. Therefore, animation employs an interesting twist upon realism: being able to represent abstract concepts and revel in its own plasticity, yet the audience can still invest and comment on its realness. Paul Wells helps frame this distinction in his book *Understanding Animation* (1998), stating that animation "prioritises its capacity to *resist* 'realism' as a mode of representation and uses its various techniques to create numerous styles which are fundamentally *about* 'realism'" (25). By seeming to record a created reality (Wells 25), as Wells paraphrases Umberto Eco's quote, "absolute unreality is offered as a real presence" (25). The concept of realism and animation is explored further in chapter 2, but this transfer of "unreal"

[5] See glossary on page 79

representation to that of "real presence" in the mind of the viewer is what makes it easier for them to accept abstract ideas and concepts in animation. The idea has been removed from the notion that the world it occupies is the same as that of the audience, unlike most of live-action film. Additionally, the idea usually wears the skin of an iconic sign and bears signifiers that hasten the communication of the intended signifieds of the animators.



Figure 10: Porky Pig's signature opening (top) and ending sequences saying his catchphrase "that's all folks" (bottom) from Friz Freleng (dir.), "Yankee Doodle Daffy", *Looney Tunes* (Warner Bros. Pictures, 1943). Animated Series.



Figure 9: Peter Porker's introduction sequence bears iconic references in its composition to *Looney Tunes*' signature opening and closing sequences from Persichetti et al. (dirs.), *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (Sony Pictures Animation, 2018). Animated Film.

Stylised mediums have the advantage of using a majority of iconic signs over indexical signs. Daniel Chandler defines and discusses iconic and indexical signs across semiotics in his book *Semiotics: The Basics* (2002). An iconic sign is one that is "perceived as resembling or imitating the signified … being similar in possessing some of its qualities" (Chandler 37). Porky Pig (Figure 10) is an icon because he bears the likeness of a pig, but he does not act like one. An indexical sign is one that is "directly connected … to the signified – this link can be observed or inferred" (Chandler 37), which are usually "physically or causally" linked to their signified (Chandler 37). A clock face directly indicates the time, a stop sign leaves no room for interpretation, even a catchphrase is an indexical sign (Chandler 37). In Sony Pictures Animation's *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (2018), the character Peter Porker – or Spider-Ham – is both a canonical character from the Marvel Comics universe and an homage to Chuck Jones, Tex Avery and Robert Clampett's work on Warner Bros. Pictures' *Looney Tunes* (1930-1969). Porker's design is an iconic signifier of Porky Pig since it resembles him, but it is also covered by a Spider-Suit. The use of Porky's famous catchphrase "that's all folks!" by Porker at the end of the film is an indexical sign because when it is heard it links directly back to Porky's character in the mind of the viewer. The iconic/indexical duality of Porker is also an example

of how in media indexical, iconic, and symbolic signs are not completely delineated from one another. Signs can be a combination of all three, particularly in cinema (Chandler 43).

In contrast to the index and the icon, a symbolic sign usually bears no resemblance to its signifier and their relationship is "fundamentally arbitrary or purely conventional – so that the relationship must be learned" (Chandler 36-37). These signs are generally used for communication like music notes, punctuation marks, and – most pertinent to the purposes of this paper – the written text. I mention symbolic signs here because while most of my discussion is on adaptation into image-based media my genre of analysis is adaptation from the Bible, a language based source. Additionally, sequential art usually features and has a relationship with language in such a way that it bears a strong impact upon its interpretation (Eisner 2-4; McCloud 152).[6] This is the case for religious art adapted from the Bible where scripture is adjacent to the images that are illuminating it.

Stylisation of symbolic signs does not change the interpretation of their signifiers because their "meaning is fixed … [and] they represent invisible ideas" (McCloud 28). The numeral five still represents five, whether it flashes on a digital clock or is handwritten. Stylisation of an icon, however, bears strong impact upon its reception and interpreted meaning (McCloud 28). This is elaborated further in section 2.1.3 in the following chapter.

As discussed earlier, signs are more readily accepted by a viewer in a stylised medium, and thus so are its message and meaning. However, just because a message is easy to interpret, does not mean that it is truthful or accurate. Kent Grayson postulates that this may be one of the reasons why some religions avoid creating "graven images" from their religious texts in his chapter *The Icons of Consumer Research* (1998) (37). This easy transmission may explain Jesus's proliferated image as being Caucasian (Figure 3). The issue then, is one of representation. Grayson explains that "instead of drawing our attention to the gaps that always exist in representation, iconic experiences encourage us subconsciously to fill in these gaps and then to believe that there were no gaps in the first place" (Grayson 41).

Thus, the tension is established between the sign and its representation. Both are discussed in the following chapter. The constructionist approach to semiotics and its

[6] See Eisner *Comics and Sequential Art*, especially chapters 1 and 6, and McCloud chapter 6.

application in animation as a medium is discussed in section 2.1. Further exploration on representation in cinema – both in a perceptual means and by means of discourse – is discussed in section 2.2.

CHAPTER 2: ANIMATION AND MEANING-MAKING

2.1: SEMIOTICS

To further examine how animation both constructs and conveys meaning, I will now outline representation in terms of semiotics and discourse. Animation takes advantage of several semiotic practices in the very principles listed by Thomas and Johnston followed by most Western animators – as discussed in the previous section.

In his book, *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices* (1997), Stuart Hall outlines both the history of representation and its present position in academia – that of its focus on the *constructionist* approach to representation. Constructionism asserts that meaning is not imbued within material objects, but rather meaning "is constructed, produced. It is the result of a signifying practice – a practice that produces meaning, that makes things mean" (Hall 24). This "signifying practice" occurs through a language system that allows people to communicate concepts "meaningfully to others" (Hall 25). Hall explains that an intended meaning depends upon the concept the sign is to represent (26), and the relationship between said sign and concept; which is "fixed by a code" (27). Codes provide a framework by which to understand how to relate signifiers and signifieds to each other (Chandler 225). These codes are socially constructed "shared 'maps of meaning'" that are "unconsciously internalized as [individuals] become members of our culture" (Hall 28-29).

To return to the Porky Pig example, the references only land if the viewer is familiar with *Looney Tunes*, i.e. if they have learned the code. Without prior exposure to the show, the audience will interpret the use of the catchphrase "that's all folks!" in the symbolic sense – the direct meaning of the words as learned in the English language. They will not interpret the indexical meaning of the catchphrase, and thus the concept the filmmakers were trying to convey would not have been communicated. Context is very important for signs to be understood, and according to Grayson this is dependent both on the strength of the relationship between signifier and signified – the "semiotic context" (40) –, and the "facility that a sign reader has in understanding signs in this context" (41). If Porker looked and crawled

like the spider he used to be, he would not bear a strong enough resemblance to Porky and therefore the semiotic link between them would be tenuous at best. A young viewer of *Spider-Verse* may not have the facility to understand the signs due to a lack of exposure to *Looney Tunes*, but those who have watched the show do.

> When we perceive a sign as 'obviously' similar to its object, this is only because the sign benefits from a culturally-based semiotic disguise: the masquerade of realistic conventions. These conventions are a masquerade because … the conventions of realistic representation are so implicit that we do not usually notice that they are operating (Grayson 35).

The constructionist approach has two branches: semiotics and discourse. Semiotics uses language as a basis for the construction of meaning and applies its study to all cultural objects as they all require cultural codes – a language – to interpret the meaning conveyed by them. Discursive representation will be discussed in section 2.2. According to Saussure and Barthes, meaning and representation are communicated by signs. Signs in themselves are made of two parts, the signifier – "the actual word, image, photo, etc.", and the signified which is the "corresponding concept [the signified] triggered off in your head" (Hall 31). The sign only generates meaning with the two parts unified, Saussure arguing that the meanings of signs were not fixed but arbitrary, shifting in their meanings throughout time and different cultural contexts. The result is that meaning "[involves] an active process of interpretation", in which there is no assurance of its accuracy (Hall 31).

An example of a sign's shift in paradigm that is specific to animation is the use of white gloves on character's hands. As explained in Vox's YouTube video essay *Why cartoon characters wear gloves*, during the 1920's film was black and white and a means of distinguishing a character's hand from their dark monotone body was needed (Vox 00:01:50-00:02:01). It was also a means of reducing costs by saving animation time. The white glove provided a means to articulate hand gestures while also removing individual joints of the fingers to maintain the rubberhose animation style and therefore decrease production time (Vox 00:00:49-00:01:50). Articulate hand gestures are also an effective means of humanising animated characters like Mickey Mouse (Vox 00:02:22-00:03:04). However, the white glove also bears influence from vaudeville performance (Vox 00:03:22-00:03:26); early animation emulated vaudeville shows and some of the world's first animators like Windsor McCay were vaudeville performers (Furniss, *A New History of Animation* 27-28, 42, 53). Vaudeville actors

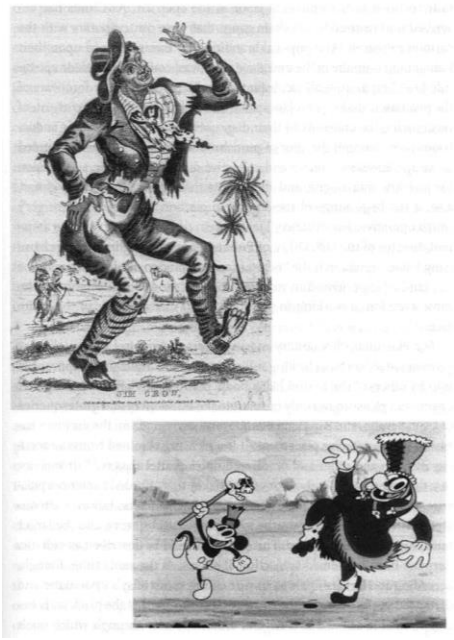


Figure 11: Like T.D. Rice, a minstrel performing as a Jim Crow character (above) Sammond asserts that Mickey's costume, "makeup", and use of gesture make him a minstrel (below) from Nicholas Sammond *Birth of an Industry* (Duke University Press, 2015), p. 225.

performing in blackface were called minstrels and they wore white gloves, ill-fitting clothes, and parodied mischievous yet good-natured characters of a simple mind set, all of which are traits that most early animated characters bore (Vox 00:03:38-00:03:50). Nicholas Sammond in his book *Birth of an Industry: Blackface Minstrelsy and the Rise of American Animation* (2015) asserts that by 1933 that "they had become *vestigial minstrels*, carrying the tokens of blackface minstrelsy in their bodies and behaviours but no longer immediately signifying as such" (30). Hence, early animated characters do not merely bear similarities to vaudeville minstrelsy, but due to their coding as white by these characteristics they too are minstrels (Sammond 2-3). The use of white gloves' development from racial stereotype and taboo blackface performance has faded from common knowledge. With the development of colour film and animation software, the use of white gloves is no longer necessary but is continued nonetheless. However, should Mickey Mouse's gloves be removed the effect would be strange, because the gloves are now synonymous with his character design (Vox 00:03:50-00:04:25).

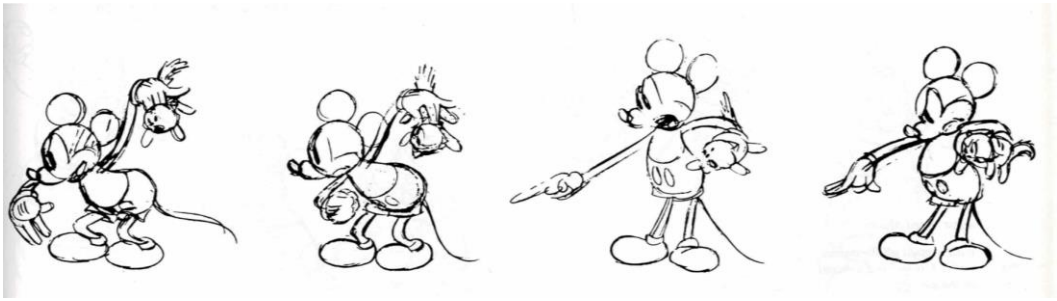


Figure 12: The use of gloves to maintain the rubberhose animation style while providing articulate movement from Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, *The Illusion of Life* (Walt Disney Productions, 1981), p. 125. Book.

Each medium has its own strengths in conveying information, meaning, and a story. This is something to keep at the forefront of research in adaptation studies. Each medium "is not simply a product or a channel but also an object endowed with a structural autonomy" regardless of the those responsible for the production of the images or whom their intended audience is (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 15). Most modern semioticians affirm the materiality of signs – that is the medium in which they are presented. Jay David Bolker argues that "signs are always anchored in a medium", while they may be more effective in one medium over another there is "no such thing as a sign without a medium" (Chandler 52). Furthermore, a medium like film has several semiotic codes that interact with one another,[7] and is a medium that is culturally deemed "more 'real' than other forms of representation" (Chandler 53). This cultural disposition influences the reception of the content by the audience, potentially changing their interpretation of the what is being signified to them. As animation is not usually photographic and part of its appeal is to deliberately draw attention to its materiality and *fabrication*, it relies upon suspension of disbelief to communicate signifiers to an audience using filmic semiotic codes. Hence why this paper provides an analysis of animation using Barthes's photographic *Connotation Procedures* as a semiotic toolkit. Although my paper deals almost exclusively with the artistic imagery and film, his book provides insight to understanding the signification processes behind the photographic image and created imagery in general.

Realism and Animation

In chapter 1 I established that the "realism" that animation employs is fundamentally different to that employed in cinema. Realism has been a strong mode of representation in Western art for centuries, and realistic codes have not always been the same, as new ones adopted through changes in cultural norms (Chandler 161). Hence, realism is a highly debated subject in academia, because of this I will briefly touch on it and provide a definition that is most relevant to the discussion of the paper, and how it relates to animation. In the introduction to *Realism and 'Reality' in Film and Media* (2002), a collection of essays edited by Anna Jerslev, Jerslev manages to position realism in the broadest sense. Realism encompasses

[7] Filmic elements: verbal, visual, audio, camera movement, and camera angle are signs that each have their own respective semiotic codes (Chandler 52-53).

"aesthetic norms … a certain view upon a specific area of the social world … [and] an experience of visual representations as 'real'" (Jerslev 9). In animation, this "experience" is what Umberto and Wells refer to as "hyperrealism", and it is the mode of representation that most Western animation employs (Wells 25). Hyperrealism is the connotation of a represented reality that also "aspire[s] to [the] verisimilitude" of live-action film (Wells 25). Jerslev states that realism is "a specific relationship between media texts and their viewers" (9), and this relationship in animated media was discussed earlier as "absolute unreality … offered as a real presence" (Wells 25), this is hyperrealism.

This drive toward verisimilitude – and therefore a sense of realism – lead to the development of the twelve principles of animation at Walt Disney Studios. However, due to animation's operation in hyperreality this verisimilitude is not denotative – like live-action – but connotative. As such it communicates in codes inside those of live-action cinema, while also possessing cinematic codes of its own. Cinema's codes of realism as outlined and critiqued by Dudley Andrew in his book *Concepts in Film Theory* (1984) are useful to understanding its modes of communication in semiotics, as discussed in the section *Connotation Procedures and Animation* below. Andrew states that "Film semiotics is virtually synonymous with the study of codes of illusion" (63). The illusion is built by denying that there is a signifying system in employ through a process of naturalisation. The signifieds seem like they belong to a plausible reality, while in actuality the "signified is foregrounded" (Chandler 161). As stated by Catherine Belsey "realism is plausible not because it reflects the world, but because it is constructed out of what is (discursively) familiar" (Chandler 161). According to Andrew:

> No matter what appears on screen, audiences will instinctively shape it into a representation of something familiar to them. The film that gratifies this attempt, the most satisfyingly representational film, we call realist. Such a film will cut up the world of appearances into perceptual images organised into patterns that make sense to us because these images and patterns exist in our culture. Without effort we can identify in the film something we have identified already in our culture as important. Thus the film reinforces the world we have constructed. (47)

Reality is easier to perceive in live-action because an audience is always willing to accept human actors in a false setting because it is something they can associate with. The audience is given minimal context to accept what they are watching and justify the on-screen action, because they actively look for these patterns while viewing the film. The action seems

plausible because it appeals to their common sense, but also the audience relies upon their exposure to common cinematic codes to immediately be familiar with the action on-screen and as such are often not aware of their own interpretation (Chandler 158). Dudley Andrew names this the "probable code" of cinema (64). Signs are thus hidden because they are surrounded by the guise of reality – or that which appears to be life-like in the case of animation. Animation automatically requires suspension of disbelief, but at the same time, makes an implausible situation far easier to digest. It is probable because the world of the film has been simplified for them and therefore signifiers are better accepted by the audience. Camera codes are also used to motivate the action on-screen and indicates to the audience that the events are interlinked, as they are in our own lives, but presented in a cinematic fashion that we do not experience in reality (Andrew 64).

According to Andrew, another code is also used to convince the audience of the realism on-screen – the code of excess (65). The code works in tandem with the probable code in suspending the audience's disbelief. Excess serves to reassure an audience that the world is one that they can understand, by supplying the audience with seemingly extraneous or unnecessary detail which then "crowd the constructed fiction from all sides. When these are made the subjects of scrutiny, it is to put us at rest within a known world that surrounds the tale, even if that tale is highly unlikely, a fragile fiction" (Andrew 65). Aptly, Thomas and Johnston's principle of Exaggeration would fall under Andrew's excessive code. Thomas and Johnston describe exaggerated movements as "a caricature of realism" (65-66), and not a distortion of it. Exaggerated actions, according to Johnston and Thomas are more convincing in animation, rather than those that are rotoscoped or drawn to imitate life more accurately (323). Exaggeration's application extends across all the principles of animation, especially character design, emotion, pose, and setting.

In her video essay *Hercules, Disney's Beautiful Hot Mess* (2016), Lindsay Ellis discusses the use of visual signifiers in animated film to familiarise modern audience to an unfamiliar on-screen context with signs they would presumably recognise. Her discussion provides an example of the use of these visual signifiers in both the probable code and excessive code. In discussing Disney Studios' *Hercules* (1997), when Hercules kneels in the temple of Zeus she comments that a "boy in ancient Greece probably would have brought a goat and slaughtered it on that altar … rather than getting on his knees and praying like a Christian"

(Ellis 00:19:31-00:19:47). The pose is used because it symbolises piety to a modern audience, and it saves time on trying to explain the cultural norms of religious practice in ancient Greece by overriding them with a pose the audience understands (Ellis 00:19:49-00:20:00), see Figure 13. These visual signifiers can also refer to pop culture and thus make use of the excessive code, and *Hercules* (1997) is crowded with them. To situate the level of Hercules's fame, the film makes use of signifiers that reference modern attributes of celebrity status. From endorsement deals, "Air-Herc" shoes, and fainting masses, to mass sweatshop produced merchandise sold from his own flagship store (Figure 14). These are excessive details that do not belong in ancient Greek mythology, and yet they contextualise the level of Hercules's success to an American audience in 1997.

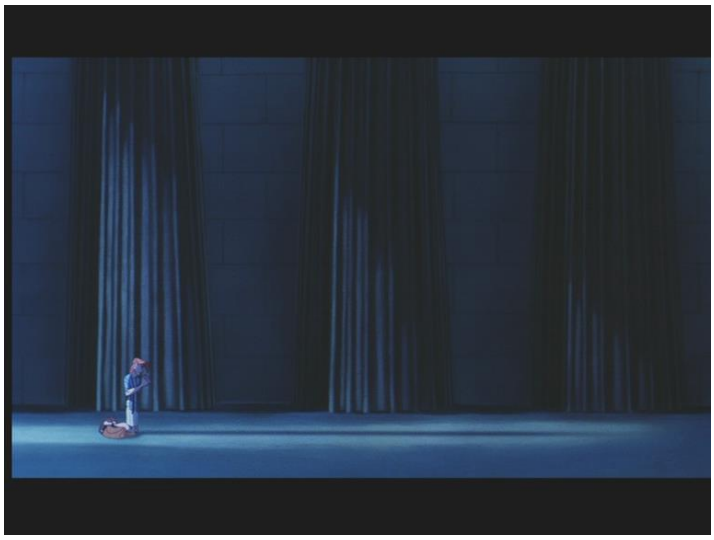


Figure 13: The character Hercules's kneeling to pray to Zeus is a more efficient means of communicating piety to a predominantly Anglo-Christian audience from Ron Clements and John Musker (dirs.), Hercules (Walt Disney Pictures, 1997). Animated Film.



Figure 14: Signifiers that reference modern attributes of celebrity status to situate the level of Hercules's fame in ancient Greece. Hercules as action figure (left), The Hercules Store (centre), and "Air-Herc" shoes (right) from Ron Clements and John Musker (dirs.), *Hercules* (Walt Disney Pictures, 1997). Animated Film.

The pursuit of realism has arguably been a strong motivator for animation production in the West. This pursuit has led to the development of the twelve principles discussed in this section. And in discussing cinema's oscillation between the probable code and the excessive code in creating a realistic portrayal of reality, animation must operate in both simultaneously. Since animated characters are constructed, their movements on-screen should not only be realistic, they must also be *convincing*. To have a character whose construction is the very essence of its appeal, and then to give it the "illusion of life" – as Thomas and Johnston so famously termed the act of animation (25) – their movements too need to be appealing, and therefore are exaggerated and thus the illusion is maintained. Yet at the same time these movements are unnatural, creating an interesting quandary of representation of an entirely fabricated realism, with none of the inherent irony of this sentiment in sight. The practice of rotoscoping and motion capture without animation on top of the movement has long since shown its uncanniness.[8] Kelly Christophers summarises the use of motion-capture and animation performance in terms of audience acceptance in her paper *Realism in CGI Character Performance* (2012). In attempting to establish a virtually-made realism, a motion-capture performance has more to overcome to be accepted by an audience than an animated character. Humans are innately aware of what natural human movement looks like, hence when presented with a human motion-capture character that presumes to occupy the same reality as that of the audience their attention is drawn to the aspects of the performance that fall short of complete human naturalness, and the performance is rejected by the audience

[8] I use the Uncanny Valley here only as a discussion point. For a full analysis on animated movement and the Uncanny Valley see Christophers' *Realism in CGI Character Performance*.

(Christophers 66). However, audiences are more accepting of anthropomorphic or mechanical motion-capture characters because they are not expected to act human (Christophers 66). This is partly why in Disney/ Lucasfilm's *Rogue One* (2016), the motion capture performance for the robot K-2SO was well received, but the response toward the mo-cap performances for human characters Grand Moff Tarkin and Princess Leia were polemic (Robinson, Plante and Bishop) (Walsh) (RadioTimes). For some, the use of actor Peter Cushing's face to (re)create Tarkin twenty years after his death, and modelling a 40-years-younger Carrie Fisher for Leia, raised questions of the integrity of motion capture performance (Dockterman) (Walsh). This served to further distance those aware of Cushing's death in the audience from the performance on-screen (Dockterman).

The instances of success in motion capture performances usually come from combining it with key-framed 3D animation, Tanine Allison discusses the relationship between the two in her paper "More than a Man in a Monkey Suit: Andy Serkis, Motion Capture, and Digital Realism" (2011). She states, "in films, television, and video games, motion capture data aids animators in charge of creating digital characters from the ground up; thus, it cannot be divorced from digital animation" (Allison 334). Allison goes on to state that the combination of the two "is still an attempt to capture something of reality" (335), even with the input of the animator's creativity. To convey realism in motion-capture performance, however, Allison asserts that "it is only by educating spectators about the production process that you can gain their willingness to believe in the image" (336). By making a case study of Peter Jackson's remake of *King Kong* (2005), and the film's extensive behind-the-scenes marketing she posits that the audience's expectation of realism is no longer that Kong's movement be "perceptually realistic" (Allison 337), but "whether motion capture allows Kong's movements to correspond more closely to [their] expectations about how living creatures move in the world" (Allison 337).

The technology has come great strides in accuracy and subtlety of performance, but accuracy of movement is not completely acceptable to the audience, especially when CGI characters are mixed in with live actors (Christophers 66; Thomas and Johnston 323). Motion capture of human characters, and the questions it raises, can draw them away from the performance. The most effective performances of CGI characters have been shown to be those that employ key-frame animation on top of their motion capture footage to create a convincing

realism in the characters (Christophers 66). In addition, the acceptance of the realism of motion capture performances exist within a discourse themselves. The marketing of the behind-the-scenes featurettes displaying digital mechanisms and the humans that perform motion capture help shape the audience's reception of the performance (Allison 325).

As discussed previously, animation's stylisation and exaggeration of characters' movements creates appeal for the audience. There is less to overcome because they are aware that they are not real. The probable code must also be excessive in animation, which is why the principles of animation were developed, so that animation then had its own codes to utilise along with those of live-action cinema. These codes are "sophisticated stylistic constructions" that create "a certain privileged form of representation, making us forget that it is a signification at all" (Andrew 65). Animation's suspension of disbelief employs the realism of cinema, but is coded differently to that of live-action and most CGI performances. Due to stylisation and the nature of the principle of exaggeration, animation has a heavily representational form of realism if it relies upon realism at all.

Connotation Procedures and Animation

Accordingly, the communication of signifiers in images is comprised of three messages (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 36). Barthes's three messages and the construction of their interaction is intricate. As such I have endeavoured to explain them in relation to animation with as much clarity as possible in the following section. To see a schematic breakdown of his semiotic structure, see Appendix II on page 90.

The first message is linguistic, and will be discussed in section 2.2, as the semiotic relationship between the word and image pertaining to scripture has need of its own discussion. I must first tackle the latter two of Barthes's messages which pertain only to the image before discussing how the image relates to the text.

Barthes's second message: the literal image as presented to us is the denoted message. It is comprised of the signs – the literal objects perceived in the image. The cultural meaning the viewer interprets from the image is the third and connotative message. The connoted message adopts the signs of the denoted message to make them its own signifiers. Therefore,

the denoted message appears to support what is being signified in the image (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 37). Barthes's procedures discuss how the processes involved in constructing the denoted message during the various stages of film production will influence the connotated message drawn from the final image, or image sequence as in the case for animation. Barthes himself stated that describing the messages from a drawing is easier than of those from a photograph because the photograph is without a code and as a denotation of reality – an "anologon" – there is too much within the photograph to describe and the language used to describe it changes the connotative message one receives from it (*Image Music Text* 17-19). The drawing, however, "[involves], finally, the description of a structure that is already connoted, fashioned with a coded signification in view" (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 19). He uses the example of comedy to explain the potency of drawings and film have in contrast to the still photograph, which without accompanying text is very rarely comedic. "The comic requires movement, which is to say repetition (easy in film) or typification (possible in drawing),[9] both these 'connotations' being prohibited to the photograph" (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 25). Animation conflates the potency of the created still-image and film.[10]

Barthes splits his six Connotation Procedures into two groups, because the first three – pose, objects, trick effects – are an alteration of reality. Since everything on-screen is constructed in animation, comics and paintings I will split the procedures into "production" and "post-production" for the purposes of my research. See Table 1 for an outline.

Table 1

New suggested groups for Roland Barthes's *Connotation Procedures*.

Source: Author's Own.

Connotation Procedures	
Production	**Post-Production**
Objects	Trick-effects
Pose	Photogenia
Aestheticism	Syntax

[9] According to John C. McKinney: "Typification, perceiving the world and structuring it by means of types and typologies … It is important for structuring the 'self', conceptualizing 'roles', and as a necessary feature of institutionalization and the development of social structure." (1)

[10] See glossary on page 79

The procedures have been organised as such because generally in most 2D studio animation productions, the aesthetics, style, look and feel are planned in pre-production and executed during production and composited in post-production. The construction of images and their layers therefore is done in the production and then touched-up and tweaked in post to then be viewed as one film. However, as a movement based medium, these processes can be run over and over for a single sequence in the production phase. Some forms of animation and independent production do not necessarily follow this process – like sand animation – where most of the procedures are done in camera. Since I am case studying 2D studio animation I have organised the procedures as seen in table 1.

The procedure Barthes names *Syntax* occurs per scene as well as over the course of the entire film. Below is an analysis of Barthes's procedures as they apply to animation and its foundational principles in conveying meaning. There is some overlap as these principles are applied across the production processes – e.g. exaggeration can be applied to Staging, Appeal, and Pose – which is part of the strength of animation as a medium: it is very fluid in practice. I have attempted to be as succinct as possible and keep the analysis of the principles through a semiotic lens.

2.1.1: Objects

This procedure refers to the arrangement of objects in a shot, or the decision of what objects to shoot and which to leave off-screen (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 22-23). While objects are referents to contextualise the narrative on-screen, they are also "accepted inducers of associations of ideas" (*Image Music Text* 22) and induce signifieds to the viewer. Rarely in animation is there anything that is seen on-screen that is accidental. The on-screen image is entirely constructed; hence all characters are objects by the very nature of their falsified construction. This means that the characters are objects of intent, filled with purpose by the animators to also "refer to clear, familiar signifieds" (23). And since a narratological structure is usually followed, all objects are "veritable symbols" (22) that serve the purposes of the story. The production team therefore rely upon an iconographic index for the character's design and actions to signify information to the audience without having to state it outright. A

character with glasses and a stack of books is immediately determined by a viewer to be smart and the source of research in the narrative, because that is the semiotic code typically used in animation. Without even knowing more about the character's background or motivations, they understand the purpose for which the character is built in the narrative.

Barthes also asserts that the arrangement of the objects induces signifieds (*Image Music Text* 22), because "perceived objects of a film are built into a particular picture of a state of affairs, a story, or an argument" (Andrew 63). In animation, we refer to this practice as the principle of Staging, which is "the presentation of any idea so that it is completely and unmistakably clear" (Thomas and Johnston 54). The principle particularly applies to the way an action is animated "so that it is understood", but also to "a personality so that it is recognisable, an expression so that it can be seen, a mood so that it will affect the audience" (Thomas and Johnston 54). In film, "distinct codes of organisation here make use of our perception, channelling it into a single picture of things. Since we trust our eyes at the perceptual level, we are primed to trust the whole picture at the organisational level" (Andrew 63-64). Hence if an object is not clearly staged the audience will not be able to understand and interpret what is being signified to them. Therefore, the clarity inherent in the practice of the principle of Staging is important for the processes of signification.

Necessarily, Staging refers to both how the objects are arranged in a shot, and where the object is in relation to their surroundings. As such the camera shot, angle, and movement are the filmic codes used in framing objects in context with each other and their background. The animator must consider what must be shot in-camera to convey the desired effect, and how to stage a character's expression and gesture so that their emotion is clear. If the scene is determined to be too cluttered there may be too many signifiers on-screen for the audience to interpret sufficiently. The signification gets lost in the excessive code. If the scene is too bare then there is not enough information to contextualise the characters and story, and the probable code has failed to convince of the character's hyperrealism.

In constructing both the object and the stage, the animator has full control of their intended effect for the audience. Barthes asserted that objects alone are not powerful, but that "they certainly possess meanings" (23) that the audience then interprets through codes.

2.1.2: Pose

Similar to Objects, the posing of subjects in such a manner that they induce chosen signifieds in the viewer of the image, e.g. the subject's praying hands signify holiness (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 22). It is apt then that Pose is one of the fundamental principles of animation. Thomas and Johnston agree that a personality in animation is "defined more by their movements than their appearance" (64), and each movement in animation is planned with at least the first pose on the first frame. Whether the rest of the poses are planned in the sequence is completely at the discretion of the animator. Considerate use of Pose adds vitality to movement (62), as it is a backbone on which most of the principles are built. Poses can be exaggerated, staged, stretched and squashed, make use of arcs and curves, have dynamic timing from pose to pose and therefore build anticipation in the audience. A pose can be appealing, have balance, weight and depth to give the character the dimensions of realism, and they can make use of asymmetry to avoid "twinning" and thus be more interesting. But it remains that the pose is drawn on the single unit of animation, which is the frame, to then change frame by frame by the addition of time to the original drawing. A frame is neither viewed nor interpreted on its own, and it is because the poses must move in animation that the principles must work together to convince the audience that the object moving on-screen is alive, or is some representation of life. The use of these principles is important because they are tools used to help signify through the objects being animated, and that movement must make sense to them – being not too far out of the realm of realism to which they are accustomed. More than that, because animation is a moving-medium, pose is more significant to the communication of signifieds as "the way in which an action is completed often tells us more about the person that the drawings of the movement itself" (Thomas and Johnston 61).

The principles Anticipation, Timing, Exaggeration, Squash and Stretch, Arcs, and Solid Drawing actively utilise effective posing in the execution of an action. Others are only perceived in the motion of the action and are not pose-specific but are employed as a means of further embedding the realism of the action as seen on-screen. Animation also has the in-built principle of Anticipation to give time to the audience to first read the pose and then the following action. Since there is movement between poses Anticipation and Timing are respectively important to prepare the audience for the action about to be seen, and to communicate the intensity of it. For the sake of clarity of intent, the audience must be able to

expect an action before it occurs on-screen; it reduces confusion in the mind of the audience member, thus suspension of disbelief is not broken. The strength of a pose is a part of Anticipation. As discussed above if the pose is staged correctly it then communicates clearly what is about to happen and the audience is reassured when the action occurs as expected, or amused when it does not. This expectation is often executed in the preparation for the main action by preceding it by a smaller action in the opposite direction. Anticipation is how the animator subconsciously triggers the audience to receive the next signifier as "it is the very pose of the subject which prepares the reading of the signifieds of connotation" (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 22). The use of Timing is another level of connotation to the signifier. Timing refers to the number of frames dedicated an action to communicate both its speed and attitude. The change in speed of the same movement "determined whether the character was lethargic, excited, nervous, relaxed" (Thomas and Johnston 64).

If Pose communicates the action, Anticipation its intent, and Timing its attitude, then the manipulation of the character's volume – Squash and Stretch – is what enables animators to "[suggest] emotions" (49). Among the first exercises animation students are asked to do is the "flour sack test", to train them to rely more on the gesture and pose of the sack to relay emotion than on facial expression (Figure 15). The flour sack is a simpler shape to manipulate and therefore there is less chance of students becoming overwhelmed by the complexity of the human face and body. Students also learn the basics of maintaining an object's volume, and to focus on pose to create a sense of emotion. These skills all factor in to making an inert object seem alive, which is the foundation of the animation principles. With Squash and Stretch the character then crosses the threshold from an object that moves, to an object that emotes and thus has the "illusion of life", the goal of every animation (Thomas and Johnston 13-15). Therefore, Thomas and Johnston considered it the most powerful of the principles in their practice utilised it the most intensively. However, Squash and Stretch is applied to the pose to enhance it, but the pose is the frame upon which the principle is applied and it is the pose that is read for its signification.

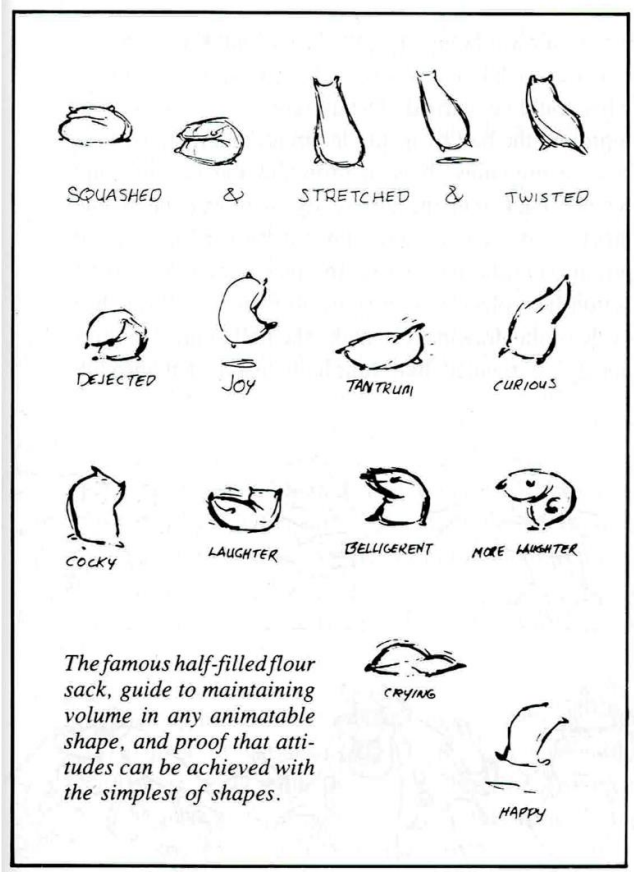


Figure 15: Disney Studios' flour sack test to suggest emotion and attitude by volume manipulation from Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, *The Illusion of Life* (Walt Disney Productions, 1981), p. 125. Book.

A means of ensuring effective posing is to avoid "twinning", which is when "both arms and leg are not only parallel but doing exactly the same thing" (Thomas and Johnston 67), which results in a rigid-looking pose. This practice falls under the principle of Solid Drawing and ensures that poses look dynamic, and the character with a sense of weight and balance.

This illusion of hyperrealism is maintained by a few principles that emulate the human body's mechanics. The use of Arcs in a movement allows for a convincing naturalistic movement, but if poses and in-betweens were not planned with the arc of the movement in mind, "straight in-betweens completely kill the essence of the action" (Thomas and Johnston 63). Thomas and Johnston also speak of the difficulty of implementing Arcs because even with planning, it was only when the action's drawings were flipped through that one could see if the drawings were placed correctly (63).[11] Arcs also make for strongly suggestive poses. As can be

[11] A technique used by 2D animators. Sequential movements were drawn upon successive pieces of paper pegged down to the drawing board. The animator would place the individual

seen in the flour sacks in Figure 15, by arching the sack along a single line of action and then applying Squash and Stretch to keep the sack's proportions, the sack suggests different emotions because the main arc faces different directions. Slow In and Slow Out refers to the timing with which most objects move from complete stillness. Most living creatures build up momentum slowly at the beginning of their actions, are at full speed midway and then slow down again. If the timing and direction of a character's movements is always linear they look robotic, unless this the desired effect of the animator.

The five elements of Follow Through and Overlap are used to maintain and enhance the sense of naturalistic motion created by Arcs and Slow In and Slow Out. Regarding pose, only two of Follow Through and Overlap's elements utilise it in their make-up: the Held Drawing and the Moving Hold.[12] The rest are considered in unison in my discussion of Follow Through and Overlap under the procedure of Aestheticism, which describes the principle's use in conveying hyperrealism in section 2.1.3 below.

The Held Drawing was developed because the animators found that it was too jarring when all of parts of the character's body arrived in the pose at the same time (Thomas and Johnston 59). Instead they devised to break up the body into parts, the head, shoulders and chest stop first, so that the pose can be read before the rest of the body settles into it. The head, chest, and shoulders stop first because they are the parts "that register how the character is feeling" (Thomas and Johnston 60), and therefore are the signifiers of emotion before the character has come to hold the pose.

Closely related is the Moving Hold which takes the Held Drawing further by indulging the pose in the eye of the viewer for a few extra frames. By exaggerating the pose in the hold, it allows for clarity and "time to absorb the attitude" at the end of the movement (Thomas and Johnston 61) (Figure 16).

---

pages between their fingers and roll their hand back and forth "to see whether they really give the illusion of the action wanted" (Thomas and Johnston 32). See Figure 51 in Appendix I.

[12] A full list and description of all five elements of Follow Through and Overlap can be found in Appendix I, page 80.

The use of pose to communicate is a very important practice in visual media, and especially its use in sequential art. It enhances the sense of movement and emotion of the character if it is staged effectively. The animator has at their disposal an array of visual signifiers to communicate the intent of a sequence in a single pose. Additionally, they have an array of stylistic considerations to ensure the audience's investment in the character. These are covered in the next section.

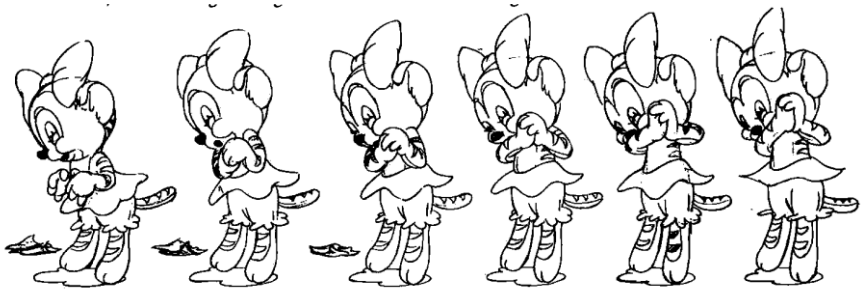


Figure 16: An example of the Moving Hold from Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, *The Illusion of Life* (Walt Disney Productions, 1981), p. 61. Book.

2.1.3 Aestheticism

This procedure involves the use of classic artistic considerations – like line and composition – in imagery (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 25). As in all visual-based media, this procedure is important in animation, especially with considerations like style and aesthetics. Animation is influenced by many other art forms: "drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, music, acting, dance, … live-action motion pictures" (Furniss, *Art in Motion: Animation Aesthetics* 61), and theatre. As such its aesthetics are influenced by more than those of the still-image media. Much of the discussion on image composition has occurred with my section on the importance of Staging an object with clarity of intent in mind. There are also other animation principles operating to enhance the overall stylistic considerations of the animated text: those of Appeal and Solid Drawing.

Appeal, in the simplest of terms, refers to a quality of design that is attractive to the viewer that provides a sense of "charm" and "magnetism" (Thomas and Johnston 68). These are very abstract and conceptual qualities to try and achieve in production design, and what is appealing in the look of the hero of the story is very different from the appeal of a villain's

design. Therefore, it is the most nebulous of the principles, and it is applied across production design, but mostly to the design of the character. Appeal must not be mistaken for likeability, but rather a design that would hold the attention of an audience member and would be interesting to them. The principle includes accentuating in the character design an aspect of their personality, demeanour, expression, pose, action, or an entire sequence in the narrative that is most important for the audience to understand, and removing those details from the design that over-complicate it. If a design is too cluttered there is too much information to focus on, and the audience is distracted from the intent of the character's relation to the narrative. Because the medium usually lacks the denoted detail of photography, the animator "must concentrate on the acting or the story structure … attempting too much refinement can make the drawing so restrained or involved that no communication is possible. Only simple and direct attitudes make good drawings, and without good drawings we have little appeal" (Thomas and Johnston 69).

There is more to Appeal than just retaining the attention of the audience with "direct attitudes". They make it easier for signifieds to be received, but what of the role of the animated character as the signifier? Why are humans more receptive to messages from a cartoon character than those of live-action, as was discussed earlier? Scott McCloud discusses how the simplified world of cartoons and their simplified features allow for a specific process of identification in the audience. He explains that the human individual's experience of life can be separated either into the realm of concepts or the realm of senses (McCloud 39). Their identity remains entirely conceptual, and therefore a cartoon is an objective construct that can be observed with the senses (McCloud 40). However, identities can be and are invested in inanimate objects that effect self-perception, like clothes for example (McCloud 38). I have discussed earlier how the cartoon is also in the conceptual realm because it emphasises the "idea of form" over that of a realistic form (McCloud 41), and therefore belongs in the same realm as the human identity. A viewer can now identify with and then become the character in their own mind (McCloud 36). McCloud explains that this is due to "the universality of cartoon imagery. The more cartoony a face … the more people it could be said to describe" (31) – see Figure 17. A process I call "iconic identification". It allows audience members a sense of participating in the narrative, and this process is essential to sustained viewership of an animation because by identifying with the cartoon character, one can then "inhabit" the realm

in which they live (McCloud 36). By abstracting a character or image, information from the image is lost but rather amplified (McCloud 31). The result is a not only a more effective means of communicating a message – as stated above – but a more compelling one. Characters can then be convincing vehicles of specific and intentional meaning to serve the purposes of the narrative. The audience's attention is focused and thus the message is readily received from the icon (McCloud 36-37). Iconic identification is therefore a powerful means of story-telling. As described by Grayson:

> By definition, seeing an icon is accompanied by a sense that in perceiving the sign we have had a sensual experience similar to seeing the object itself. Because we can see the object in the sign, we are often left with a sense that the icon has brought us closer to the truth than if we had instead seen an index or a symbol. (36)

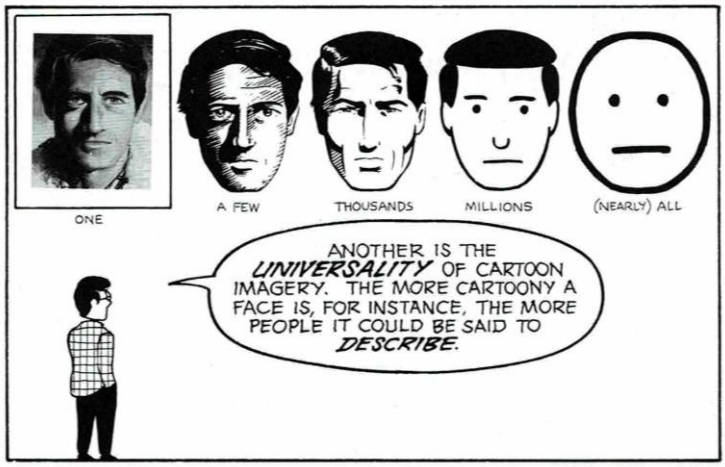


Figure 17: Abstracting human features in stylised mediums allows for more viewers to identify with characters from Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (Harper Perennial, 1994), p.31. Book.

For this process of identification to be maintained the cartoon's appeal must extend beyond appearance to the way they move. The mechanics of the animated character's motion was discussed in the section previous, and they are foundational to the understanding of their expressiveness. The rest of the principles discussed here provide the finishing refinements to animated movement (Follow Through and Overlapping Action) and expression (Secondary Action).

The overall goal of Follow Through and Overlapping Action is to further instil the sense of the character's hyperrealism. The principle helps "achieve a new feeling of life and clarity …

we could use the Follow Through on the fleshy parts to give us the solidity and dimension, we could drag the parts to give the added feeling of weight and reality" (Thomas and Johnston 61-62), overall giving the impression of naturalistic movement. For example, Thomas and Johnston speak of how by dragging the loose flesh on the character behind their main action provides "a looseness and solidity to the figure that is vital to the feeling of life" (60). Since the principle provides a feeling of the weight of the object, it makes use of Timing to do so. The hair billowing behind a character's head as they run should catch up faster to the character when they stop than their loose flesh because hair has less mass than their skin.

Follow Through and Overlapping Action signifies by utilising effective Anticipation. A main action has two parts: the build-up and the follow through. The build-up comprises all the smaller actions that anticipate what their outcome will be (Thomas and Johnston 61). A golfer looks at the ball and raises the club behind his head. The audience can then anticipate that he is going to hit the ball with his club. Therefore, each action in the build-up are individual signs connoted and signified again when the movement is completed. The re-signification is complete when the character finally completes the anticipated movement.

Secondary Action is the "extra business" that provides the audience with the information of the mood and mind-set the character is in when completing the main action (Thomas and Johnston 64). Timing also plays a factor, but the animator generally utilises gesture and facial expression in secondary action to "[make] a unified statement through the drawing and timing of separate, but related, parts" of the character (Thomas and Johnston 64). This "will add richness to the scene, naturalness to the action, and a fuller dimension to the personality of the character" (Thomas and Johnston 64). It therefore contributes to the overall efforts to have Appeal in the movement of the character, and therefore aid in iconic identification.

> Conveying a certain feeling is the essence of communication in any art form. The response of the viewer is an emotional one, because art speaks to the heart. This gives animation an almost magical ability to reach inside any audience and communicate with all peoples everywhere … It is one of animation's greatest strengths (Thomas and Johnston 15).

One can begin to see how these movement-based principles tie together to convey realism of the movement and add to the Appeal of the movement too because the actions look

beautiful rather than merely pragmatic and natural. “Spectators enjoy watching something that is appealing to them. While the live actor has charisma, the animated drawing has appeal” (Thomas and Johnston 68).

The illusion of life comes from “ways of making a drawing, ways of relating drawings to each other – all the refinements in this language of imagery” (Thomas and Johnston 25-27). Therefore, these related drawings must always be interpreted in composite – explored further in section 2.1.6 – and the principles combined then signify because the audience is convinced by the object’s life. Other processes are also involved in post-production that construct meaning and influence how a character’s performance is received. These are discussed in the following three sections. Sections 2.1.4 and 2.15 are additive procedures in that they are part of the compositing processes over the animation. 2.1.6 Displays how all the previous five procedures are interpreted in a screening of the finished film.

2.1.4 Trick Effects

The process of insertion – adding or removing an element (e.g. a subject or object) that was not in the original shot (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 21). At a practice level, compositing software is a postproduction tool used to fix mistakes from rendering, but also to composite visual effects like fire in the animation. CGI additions are standard modern industry practice, and by their very nature of their own fabrication, they are not solely from the realm of live-action film and rely upon animation principles for character animation. Modern special effects are born of and aided by animation practices. Some of the earliest examples of animation were used as special effects in early cinema (Furniss, *A New History of Animation* 28). Stop-motion was the prevailing mode of animation of early cinema, like the works of Arthur Melbourne-Cooper (1874-1961), but it was also a means of special effects to animate objects on set and in-camera (Furniss, *A New History of Animation* 29-30, 36). The development of plasticine allowed for the use of clay both in animation and stopped-camera substitution special effects (Furniss, *A New History of Animation* 31).[13]

[13] These are but a few examples of animation in early special effects. For more detail see Furniss, *A New History of Animation* chapter 2.

Early animation and special effects appealed to magicians of the time because of the "emphasis on visual spectacle, and the sense of wonder that both forms of entertainment provoked in audiences" (Furniss, *A New History of Animation* 28). The most celebrated practitioner of "trick films" being Georges Méliès for his innovative use of special effects and animation in his films (Furniss, *A New History of Animation* 34). While trick films are no longer popular, the appeal of animation and special effects remains. I have discussed previously animation's appeal in its fabrication for the audience, but another part of its appeal is that one is being tricked into believing these fabricated objects on-screen are alive, while also being aware of the trick. More so, when the audience becomes aware that the animation is produced by a human, their appreciation increases because one is amazed that a human could make something unreal alive. Much like the magic of early cinema, which relied upon the "audience's curiosity on how such illusions were achieved" (Furniss, *A New History of Animation* 28).

Modern animation continues to emphasise the sense of wonder and visual spectacle. After the film is released there is a heavy prominence given to explaining how the animation and visual effects of a film were made. The enjoyment of the visual spectacle remains during the screening, but the focus on visual spectacle has shifted from during the screening to post-screening nowadays. Behind the scenes breakdowns are released so that we are to praise the achievements of the unreality of the film, and are made aware of the mechanics behind the signifying process (Allison 325). But we must only be made aware afterward. As with the example of motion capture performance discussed earlier, if the visual effects are successful your focus on the narrative should not be disrupted.

Returning to Catherine Belsey's quotation, "realism is plausible not because it reflects the world, but because it is constructed out of what is (discursively) familiar" (Chandler 161). In the light of modern cinema, where even a biopic film like *I, Tonya* (2017) needed to use CGI to fabricate specific elements in this 'true' story. The film needed CGI for Tonya's renowned Triple-Axel, which is rarely achieved by female figure skaters in real life (Fair 00:06:00-00:06:31), and the audience at the skating competitions were made using crowd simulators. The effects are successful because they rely on familiarity not reality. Tonya's jump cannot be watched in slow motion at the rink, but can during the broadcasted recap. The film relies upon the audience's familiarity with sports program codes to accept what they are watching is real.

> The methodological interest of trick effects is that they intervene without warning in the plane of denotation; they utilize the special credibility of the photograph – this, as was seen, being simply its exceptional power of denotation – in order to pass off as merely denoted a message which is in reality heavily connoted (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 21)

These films are a construct of a subjective representation made to signify actual events, yet stylised to increase narratological impact. Barthes notes that in "no other treatment does connotation assume so completely the 'objective' mask of denotation" (21), that being visual effects. Live-action films "benefit from the prestige of the denotation: the photograph allows the photographer to conceal elusively the preparation to which he subjects the scene to be recorded" (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 21). Animation has no such benefit, neither does it have the hindrance to conceal its fabrication. It is not the so-called honesty/realism of live-action, but rather an enjoyed deception.

2.1.5 Photogenia

The "embellish[ment]" of the shot both during and after the image is taken (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 24), e.g. lighting, or the use of compositing software to manipulate colour, saturation, and hue in the image and to grade it. This process is known as compositing in the animation production chain, and involves situating layers of rendered footage, or passes, on top of one another first before grading and giving the film its final polish. In most forms of animation, the lighting is simulated in a computer or crafted as a digital layer over the animation frame. Depending upon the mode of animation the embellishment can sometimes occur in pre-production phase. For example, the lighting for a stop-motion animation production can be done in-camera, but afterward may have the lighting edited digitally.

The manipulation of lighting and colour of the scene signifies its mood and tone to support the desired effect, but also to signify the genre. There are indexical tropes to each genre in mise-en-scène to situate the action on-screen.[14] Lighting can also be used as an icon:

[14] According to TVTropes.org a trope is: "a storytelling device or convention, a shortcut for describing situations the storyteller can reasonably assume the audience will recognize." I am using the website TVTropes as a source as it has collated metadata on every trope used in film and television, as well as providing several lexicons and definitions of the tropes

a headlamp shining in the eyes of a character in a sparsely furnished dark room immediately signifies an interrogation scene in the mind of the viewer. In DreamWorks's *The Prince of Egypt 'Director's Commentary'* (2004), the directors mention how the lighting used in the scene between Rameses and Moses after the death of Rameses's son was a direct reference to that used in Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941) (Figure 18 and Figure 19).



Figure 19: The Law Library scene from Orson Welles (dir.), *Citizen Kane* (Mercury Productions, 1941). Live-action Film.



Figure 18: Rameses carries his dead son through a beam of light from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), The Prince of Egypt (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film.

2.1.6 Syntax

When the viewer is presented with a sequence of images, it is the sequence in its entirety that forms the connotation. Conversely, each image in a sequence does not have its own individual connotation, but in fact the entire sequence bears one connotation (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 24-25). As stated above, animation deals with image sequence exclusively. Syntax binds all the Connotation Procedures together, it is what the audience experiences when viewing a screening. Cubitt also arguing that "the moving image … is not concerned with the discrete but with continuous movement, and its unit is not the frame but the succession of frames" (363). If a single frame of animation is presented at projected speed without the context of its preceding and following frames in the animated sequence, the frame does not exist in the mind of the viewer. This is especially true of smear frames – frames where an

---

themselves. Whilst more populist in nature, the site does offer excellent insight into the various literature techniques prevalent in any medium consumed by an audience.

instant of movement has been distorted or spread across the line of action of the character, and when played in sequence the action appears intensified.

Thomas and Johnston themselves spoke of Syntax on as fundamental a level as the principle of Overlapping Action and Follow Through. They write: “in effect, the animator is drawing in the fourth dimension, for he is depicting a figure the way it would be at only that precise moment. The drawings are not designed to be viewed by themselves, but only in a series projected at an established speed” (60). The sequences of images draw us through the entire film to become a final representation (Andrew 42). It is from this entire representation that one can draw an interpretation and meaning from each object and sequence. During Syntax, both of sequence and the entire film that the audience interprets the signifieds from their culturally shared and understood codes.

As was discussed under *Objects*, in constructing the literal arrangement of the objects within Barthes ‘s second (denoted) image, the image (and therefore its icons) becomes imbued with the animator’s code. This then has an impact upon the third non-coded image, the connotated one, which is the symbolic meaning read by the viewer (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 33-46). It is during Syntax that the audience interprets the second and third messages respectively. By constructing the image, the obvious meaning drawn from the third message is more readily interpreted – obvious being the intentional meaning, the one “which comes ahead … to seek me out” (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 54). The use of “aesthetic value [and] emphasis” “devastates ambiguity” (56) of the intended meaning of a scene as chosen by the creators. According to Barthes the construction of pose and movement “does not distract but accentuates the meaning” (56), a trait, he asserts, of all art that employs realism. And is a trait that is employed all elements of animated story-telling, in the process of “amplification through simplification” (McCloud 30) as discussed in section 2.1.3. Andrew states that “cinema has no dictionary specifying common denotations like a Webster’s. The common meaning of a cinematic signifier can only be determined by the context which not only modifies the sign but instructs us to read it at such and such a level” (72).

The purpose of understanding how the image is read during Syntax “…is not to inventorize the connotators but to understand that in the total image they constitute *discontinuous* or better still *scattered traits*” (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 50). Some denotations

are without connotation. What distinguishes the second message from the third is that it "associates elements without any system" (*Image Music Text* 51), and therefore the connotated is naturalised by the denoted, making "[innocent] the semantic artifice of connotation" (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 45) which is a substantial practice in animation. Simply by watching that which is somewhat realistic to us, we readily forget that we are being signed at. As stated by Barthes:

> …connotation is only system, can only be defined in paradigmatic terms; … the discontinuous connotators are connected, actualized, 'spoken' through the syntagm of the denotation, the discontinuous world of symbols plunges into the story of the denoted scene as though into a lustral bath of innocence. (*Image Music Text* 51)

The "experience of realism", according to Andrew, is the design "of certain codes" and "not just on its perceptual base and … on the complexity of its representational schemata" (64). When we see a photograph, we believe it to be natural, and any connotations drawn from it are our own induced signifieds. We do not think that they were constructed by the photographer for us to interpret a very specific message. We assume so because we have been presented with a sufficient representation of reality. "The reader receives as a simple denotation what is in actual fact a double structure – denoted-connoted" (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 22), but for animation the denoted image is completely constructed. It is thus connoted-connoted.

In terms of the animated image, an appealing character is easy to identify and interact with in the mind of the viewer. As has been discussed, this does not mean that a character needs to resemble a human. The viewer can still form a connection with an abstracted or anthropomorphised character, what is needed is one that communicates (signifies) effectively, because "connotation drawn from knowledge is always a reassuring force" (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 29) (Figure 20). As McCloud summarises, "we humans are a self-centred race. We see ourselves in everything. We assign identities and emotions where none exist. And we make the world over in our image" (32-33), therefore "the cartoon is a vacuum into which our identity and awareness are pulled, an empty shell that we inhabit which enables us to travel in another realm. We don't just observe the cartoon, we become it!" (36).

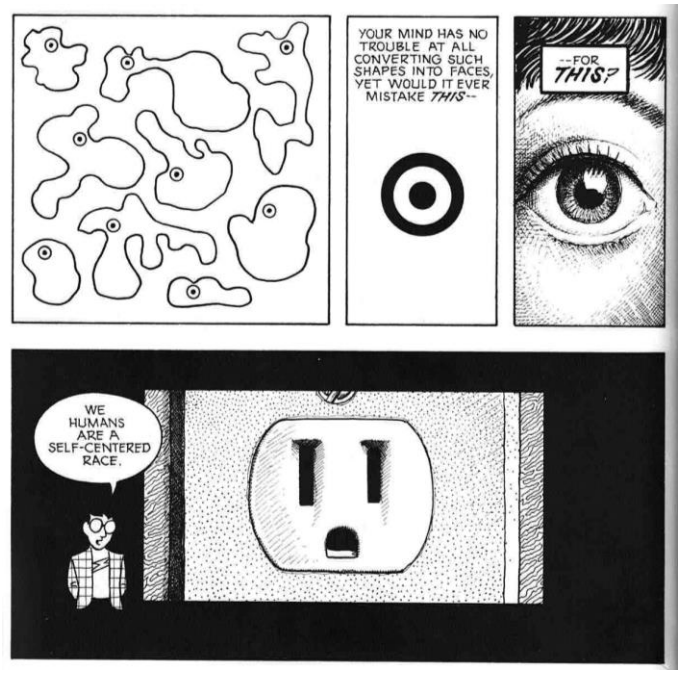


Figure 20: The human mind anthropomorphises even the most abstract of shapes from Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (Harper Perennial, 1994), p.32.

All the above techniques, principles, and procedures work together to convince that the characters on-screen full of personality, because they employ and maintain a sense of cinematic realism to communicate signifiers. Object, Pose, and Aestheticism are fundamental to maintaining this sense of realism – or hyperrealism. Trick Effects and Photogenia are useful agents that are not as important to iconic identification as the first three procedures but have an impact upon the connotations drawn from the sequence. They too make use of icons and can distract from iconic identification if not composited properly into the film. As stated by Barthes "man likes signs and likes them clear" (*Image Music Text* 29). These first five procedures combine to communicate signs to the viewer in the Syntax procedure.

"This is without doubt an important historical paradox: the more technology develops the diffusion of information (and notably of images), the more it provides the means of masking the constructed meaning under the appearance of the given meaning" (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 46).

Meaning from the Image and Scripture

The above sections of 2.1 describe how the signifieds are derived from the content of the images by Barthes's second and third messages, but this study necessarily focuses upon animation and created imagery's adaptation from biblical scripture. Semiotically, what structures are in place for the viewer to interpret the image in relation to scripture? It is Barthes's first message borne by the image, the linguistic message.

Historically, literature was the primary text and source of connotation (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 25). The image illustrated the text to help "elucidate" it or reduce the text to its essential connotations. The works adapted from the Bible in classic art are examples of illustration of an authoritative text. Looking at the illustration one would know which biblical account it was depicting because of the long-standing development of Christian iconography in these artworks. Most of these works are accompanied by a title, and sequential art panels usually have the benefit of scriptural text adjacent to them. The image is still subordinate to the text though, even while illustrating the text in a stylistic manner.

Currently, according to Barthes, the relationship between the text and the image has reversed. The text amplifies the image while also serving to "sublimate, patheticize or rationalise" it (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 25-26). The "text loads the image, burdening it with a culture, a moral, an imagination" (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 26). This is true in modern cinema where scripture is often adapted into films with elements of the plot stripped, and what remains is then reconstituted into the story. The result is a series of parallels between the source text and the film that give the narrative a sense of the epic, and the threatening presence of history repeating itself. This is exemplified in the Moses/Jesus hybrid character of Caesar in 20th Century Fox's *War for the Planet of the Apes* (2017).

The film is the last instalment of the three prequel films to the *Planet of the Apes* franchise. Caesar is a genetically modified chimpanzee, and is the leader of those genetically modified apes that are loyal to him – having already been betrayed in the previous film by Koba, who is therefore Caesar's "Judas". In *War for the Planet of the Apes* Caesar's ultimate goal is the freedom of his troop, held captive by a group of zealous human soldiers seeking to eradicate all apes. However, among the thematic and visual comparisons to Moses and Jesus Figure 6), including Caesar being bound to a cross, is Caesar's revenge story and a post-

apocalyptic narrative. Russell J.A. Kilbourne in his paper *(No) Voice Out of the Whirlwind* (2014) posits that the use of biblical story elements in post-Christian society may "have to do with a broader millennial, and now postmillennial, preoccupation with impending apocalypse" (27). This societal anxiety about apocalypse is the "culture" with which the image is "burdened". Each of these narrative structures also have their own narratological codes that the audience expects to interpret and therefore "rationalise" it. The processes involved in repurposing the biblical text to magnify the narrative of the image are another example of the application of McCloud's concept of amplification through simplification. The re-adaptation or repurposing of the Bible for plot structure potentially burdens the plot for the viewer, creating the expectation that film is unoriginal.

There are power stuctures at work upon and between the image and text. I explored in the previous sections how animation's mode of representation is heavily semiotic, but as can be seen from figures Figure 11, Figure 13, and Figure 14 there is a strong sense of discourse that both informs the content of the animation, and the procedures, processes, and principles which it relies upon to communicate meaning.

2.2 DISCOURSE

Andrew discusses that semiotics must be balanced within the context of the specific film and situation of the viewer for meaning to be interpreted from it (73). He acknowledges that it has been responsible for building the codes of cinema that we use today in film analysis, "enumerate[ing] the threads of the weave of the "representational picture" (64). However, he states that connotation without context reduces the film to its signifiers and not a text *containing* signifiers (74).

I have discussed previously how signifiers make use of a code to interpret their meaning, and that the code is socially constructed. However, how did that code become the dominant mode of expression? The code itself has a context, and it must be understood to evaluate the impact it has upon the code, and those that are using it to interpret meaning. This is the crux of the power of animation as a medium, the Connotation Procedure of Syntax insists

upon the importance of context for its meaning to be understood. Andrew insists that it is difficult to "predict [the] workings" of "the structure of connotation", because it is dependent upon the "context of the genre and the situation of the viewer" (73). The viewer's situation being their own cultural backgrounds, life experiences, and understanding of cinema. He then concludes that "the semiotic endeavour which constructed so many codes of cinema has given way to interpretive strategies engaging cinematic discourse" (Andrew 73).

The study of a text, in this instance a work of animation, within the context of its social knowledge and power structures is known as the discourse within which the film was produced. But this is something Barthes himself stressed:

> Formerly, the image illustrated the text (made it clearer); today, the text loads the image, burdening it with a culture, a moral, an imagination. Formerly, there was reduction from text to image; today, there is amplification from the one to the other. The connotation is now experienced only as the natural resonance of the fundamental denotation constituted by the photographic analogy and we are thus confronted with a typical process of naturalization of the cultural. (*Image Music Text* 25-26)

> Does the coding of the denoted message have consequences for the connoted message? It is certain that the coding of the literal prepares and facilitates connotation since it at once establishes a certain discontinuity in the image: the 'execution' of a drawing itself constitutes a connotation. But at the same time, insofar as the drawing displays its coding, the relationship between the two messages is profoundly modified: it is no longer the relationship between a nature and a culture (as with the photograph) but that between two cultures; the 'ethic' of the drawing is not the same as that of the photograph. (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 43)

How then, do we interpret the culture of the constructed image and the culture of the artists involved in its creation? The other branch of semiotics mentioned above is representation. Representation is concerned with framing the discourse/power-structures that are active during the creation of the text. This then is how one would interpret the "ethic" of a created image.

Michel Foucault believed that it was the discourse around a subject that defined its meaning, i.e. the production of its knowledge. Breaking away from semiotics' language-bound approach, what Foucault defined as "discourse" allowed one to understand the power and knowledge surrounding that subject throughout history, to interrogate "where meaning comes

from" (Hall 45). Discourse were those underlying societal "rules and practices that produced meaningful statements" (Hall 44), to then empower certain individuals to control the meaning about subjects.

"Foucault's work was much more historically grounded, more attentive to historical specificities, than the semiotic approach. As he said, 'relations of power, not relations of meaning' were his main concern" (Hall 43).

Analysing "historical specificities" is important because as we have seen, they have had an influence upon what is regarded as realism in art, and the creation and modification of signifiers. Signifiers are socially constructed and transmitted, but what of understanding the factors shaping the society? Foucault's "approach … [sees] knowledge as always inextricably enmeshed in relations of power because it was always being applied to the regulation of social conduct in practice." (Hall 47)

Consequently, Foucault's stance on representation meant that the subject had returned to the stage of semiotics – Barthes and Saussure had abolished it as all meaning was drawn from connotation – but the subject was not autonomous. The subject was now *subjected to* discourse.

> 'Subject' is produced within discourse. The subject of discourse cannot be outside discourse, because it must be subjected to discourse. It must submit to its rules and conventions, to its dispositions of power/knowledge. The subject can become the bearer of the kind of knowledge which discourses produces. It can become the object through which power is relayed. But it cannot stand outside power/knowledge as its source and author. (Hall 55)

Often, we are not aware of the power structures beneath our semiotic codes of convention. This is because "the conventions of realistic representation are so implicit that we do not usually notice that they are operating" (Grayson 35). They are only "meaningful to the extent that it supports our semantic universe" (Andrew 63). An example is the accepted cultural code of red meaning danger. The origins of the sign are now obscure to us, but we do not question where the practice came from because it is an effective means of communicating danger, it "supports our semantic universe" and therefore that is enough.

The understanding of semiotics and discourse is essential to my visual analysis within art history. Within art history, religious works are riddled with religious iconography, but – as

Foucault would argue – they are also shaped by the discourse of the periods in which they were created. In the historical practice of book illustration, Weitzmann identifies a tendency to "extreme conservatism" of an iconographic archetype over centuries in practice. Historically, he reads this not "as a lack of inventiveness" but instead as "reverence towards a picture once a satisfactory artistic solution had been found for its composition" (Weitzmann, *Narration in Early Christendom* 91). In contemporary times, major animated productions are too influenced by the power structures inherent in the culture in which they are produced, as well as by the whims of their production houses/ financiers.

If I were to accept all the signifiers of animation and ignore their context I would be fundamentally working against my argument on why the animated medium conveys meaning so potently. The Connotation Procedures work together in a context to convey meaning, and so do the principles of animation. And discourse impacts identification with the animated character, the iconographic vacuum which we inhabit when we watch the film, like a lack of diverse characters for example.

The Prince of Egypt and Discourse

In considering the context under which the film was produced, it is worth noting that *The Prince of Egypt* (1998) was the first film produced by DreamWorks Animation (now known for many franchises including *Shrek*, *How To Train Your Dragon* and many more), cofounded by CEO Jeffery Katzenberg, former chairman of Walt Disney Studios. *The Prince of Egypt* bears some similarities in structure to popular Disney films of the time. Most of the film is animated in 2D, and it utilises musical numbers to provide story exposition. The score is written by Hans Zimmer and songs by Stephen Schwartz, both of whom had won Academy Awards for Walt Disney Animation Studios before on different projects. However, the film's subject matter is vastly different. Mark I. Pinsky explains in his book *The Gospel According to Disney* (2004) that during the 1990's Disney's portrayal of magic over religious morals caused conservative Christian groups in the United States to boycott Disney movies (131). *The Prince of Egypt*, however, is transparently an adaptation of one of the most renowned religious figures of all time, and one that markets itself as faithful adaptation. There was speculation at the time of the film's release whether the choice to adapt the Exodus story was because of the founders

of DreamWorks SKG – Steven Spielberg, Jeffery Katzenberg, and David Geffen – were all Jewish. However, all three producers insisted that their faith had no bearing on the choice (Pinsky 137). Finally, two of the films directors – Brenda Chapman and Steve Hickner – were former Disney animators, with Simon Wells joining from Amblimation, Steven Spielberg's animation company which was absorbed into DreamWorks.

In terms of content, the film follows the structure of a coming of age story for Moses, but with the scale of a historic epic, as outlined by Jennifer Rohrer-Walsh in her paper *Coming-of-Age in* 'The Prince of Egypt' (78). She notes that the coming-of-age story is a vehicle "to mould and guide [the protagonist] according to culturally acceptable standards" (Rohrer-Walsh 78). Which culture's standards are regarded as "acceptable" in the film? Those of the Egyptians? The Hebrews? Or those of a modern Western audience. I argue that it is a combination of the latter two in the following paragraphs.

The film prefaces itself as "true to the essence, values and integrity of a story that is a cornerstone of faith for millions of people worldwide" (Chapman, Hickner and Wells, The Prince of Egypt 00:00:24-00:00:42). As such the producers consulted with hundreds of Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious leaders, from the fundamental to charismatic, in an effort reach the "essence" of the story, and to avoid the film offending their beliefs (Pinsky 132).

There are also several power structures explored within the text of *The Prince of Egypt*. The Hebrew God against the gods of Egypt, the struggle of the Hebrews slaves under the rule of the Egyptian pharaoh, and that of Moses against his adopted brother Rameses. The pitting of God against the gods of Egypt is framed as more of a revelation that there are no Egyptian gods. The signs of wonder displayed by the Egyptian priests Hotep and Huy are coded as deceitful, but those of the Hebrew God, Yahweh, are miraculous and are a result of His power alone. This coding is due to the priests being the victim of several of Moses' and Rameses' pranks, which immediately signifies to the audience that they are comic relief and are therefore predisposed not to take them or their actions seriously. The miracles of God are stylised with the same painterly aesthetic of the rest of the film, they therefore appear – in the mode of hyperrealism – more realistic. In contrast, the tricks of the priests are all in the same 2D style that the characters, and are therefore objects subject to the same plasticity of the

cartoon. We also see the mechanics of some of the priests' tricks, and eventually they no longer perform them in response to each plague sent by God. All these codes serve to undermine the only representatives for the religion of the Egyptians in the film, and therefore the religion, and those who practice it entirely.

In the power dynamic between the two brothers, Rameses is born as the heir to the Egyptian dynasty lasting centuries, and Moses is adopted into it after being found floating on the Nile river in a woven basket by the queen. Rameses sees it as his mandate to maintain the ancient traditions of the Pharaohs before him. The grandeur of Egypt increases under his reign, but it also increases the suffering of the Hebrew slaves that built it. Rameses' displays of power are borne out of a deep sense of insecurity and fear of destroying the Empire of his forefathers. However, Moses' power is decreased throughout the film. When he learns of his Hebrew heritage he ultimately flees into the desert, stripping himself of his Egyptian garb and jewellery – and therefore his power – as he journeys through it. When he is accepted into the Midian tribe he is completely naked and powerless, but he begins to craft a humble identity for himself amongst them, and ultimately leave his Egyptian one behind. Moses has been humbled, but then is ordained by God to release the Hebrews from captivity. Through the ten plagues that are stuck upon Egypt by God, Rameses' power is made weaker and weaker, while the presence of God in the film – and therefore His power – increases. The film portrays God through the depictions of the various miracles and plagues described in the account of Exodus. It was a deliberate choice by the directors to avoid traditional depictions of God with religious iconography (Chapman, Hickner and Wells, Director's Commentary 00:42:35-00:42:46). To do this they made the choice to have the presence of God be seen in natural phenomena that behaved in a supernatural way (Chapman, Hickner and Wells, Director's Commentary 00:43:34-00:43:41). For example, in the Burning Bush scene, God speaks from "fire that seemed like water" (Chapman, Hickner and Wells, Director's Commentary 00:43:55-00:43:58), shown with the water reflections that bounce around the cave walls (Figure 21). The effect is evocative because the viewer has had ample opportunity before the encounter to see how fire behaves in this animated world, and therefore does not detract from the audience's focus on the narrative.

The film makes the presence of God more personal to Moses by them being voiced by the same actor, Val Kilmer. It creates the sense that there is a relationship between them, and

since the audience has already identified with Moses, it also brings God's otherworldly presence nearer to them. God also stated that Moses' staff is the means through which He will display His wonders, and therefore the staff is coded as the symbol of authority of God. All are signifiers of increased power, while the land of the Egyptians is decimated to a literal crumbling mass, resulting in the release of the Hebrews from slavery.

The power dynamics in *The Prince of Egypt* start as entirely one-sided on the part of Pharaoh Seti and then Pharaoh Rameses' enslavement of the Hebrews. In the process of shifting the dynamic toward their liberation, the film biases the cultural standards of the Hebrews and their worship of the God, Yahweh. By coding the practice of the Egyptian's religion as deceitful and comedic, the film completely undermines it. I believe this to be because the source text of Exodus asserts that Yahweh is the only God. By remaining faithful "in essence" to the source, the film had to also take such a stance.

While first presenting Rameses as a likable if conflicted and misguided young man (expanded upon in chapter 4 below) the film situates his cruelty as coming out of a deep sense of insecurity, and as he continues to lose it as the film progresses, he clings to it more vehemently, resulting in him increasing the suffering of the Hebrews. This is contrasted with Moses' increased humility and servant leadership. He has no power, and is therefore the signifier of the presence and power of God. Moses' humility is therefore foregrounded as the moral core of the film.



Figure 21: The Burning Bush from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film.

CHAPTER 3: THE BIBLE AND VISUAL ADAPTATION STUDIES

This paper uses both visual and textual adaptation theory to gain understanding in the challenges involved in adapting between two visual mediums and those that arise in adapting a literary source into film. As established in the first chapter, comic adaptation theory is useful to understand the processes involved in adapting between still-image and moving-image based media.

Pascal Lefèvre, in his paper *Incompatible Visual Ontologies?* (2017) addresses the biggest problems in adapting comics – an inherently visual medium, pre-loaded with expectations in the form of tropes with regards to character appearance and mannerisms, much like animation – into live-action film. These issues are birthed in the differing visual ontologies of the two media, as well as the audience's predisposal to primacy: people tend to prefer the first version of a story they encounter (Lefèvre 2). Primacy is difficult to overcome and in terms of people's encounters with reading the Bible especially, as it is a personal experience unique to each reader beyond standard dogmatic interpretation.

Comics and film have some characteristics in common; both relay stories in a series of images, but while film is diegetic, the comic is parodic. Lefèvre expands upon this dichotomy in the visual ontologies in the storytelling between the two mediums to identify four main problems in the adaptation process from comic to film (Lefèvre 3-12):

1) The deletion/addition of content during the process of adapting the comic into a script suited to film
2) Unique characteristics of film and comic layout: comics are panel-based that vary in size depending on the scene and artist's choices, whereas films are widescreen and remain that way with few exceptions.
3) The translation of drawings into photography
4) Importance of sound in film against the "silence" of comics

He argues that these four areas are the main reasons why neither film critics nor comic book readers are satisfied with the filmic adaptation.

The deletion/addition process in script-writing is a necessary part of writing a filmic narrative, but irritates fans as the adaptation no longer feels true to the original comic narrative. This is also impacted by problem two: film and comics have unique characteristics within their respective writing processes; primarily the intended narrative length of either medium is different. Comics are planned for monthly instalments that can last years and undergo several reiterations (Lefèvre 10), but a film is generally only a couple of hours long. Therefore, not all pages of the original text can be shot and is thus invariably altered. In the context of a biblical adaptation of the historic books, the script must elaborate culture and character for the viewer due to the nature of some of the text being a chronicle of events, and others heavily laden with metaphor, if the theology and context is not handled carefully the adaptation can seem disrespectful and even sacrilegious to the viewer. An example of poor consideration in adaptation is Ridley Scott's film *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014), in which the story of Moses was loosely followed, and God was personified. The depiction of God was problematic because it immediately alienates those in the audience that practice either Judaism, Islam, or Christianity. Additionally, both Moses and Rameses – Hebrew and Egyptian in ethnicity respectively – were played by Caucasian actors Figure 22). The practice of whitewashing in film is not new to the medium, neither is it unique to it. Classically, in Western artistic renditions of biblical accounts, characters were typically portrayed with traditionally European features – fair skin and hair, blue eyes – but due to modern culture's demand for more diversity and better representation in film, the cinematic medium is responding to reflect these values, albeit very slowly.

Considering the modern audiences these biblical adaptations are being screened to, sections of the text are usually cut to accommodate a two-hour running time, or altered to avoid explaining cultural norms in the Bible. As an example, in the book of Exodus, Tzipporah's father and Midianite high priest, Jethro, gives her to Moses as thanks for protecting his daughters from violent shepherds (New International Version, Ex. 2.15-21). In the adaptation, *The Prince of Egypt*, the film avoided commentary on the practice of arranged marriage, and potentially alienating female viewers by having Tzipporah and Moses's relationship develop over time and before getting married.



Figure 22: An example tweet from the internet #BoycottExodusMovie campaign shows the importance of representation in casting as well as scriptural consideration from @Marcohtx, "Apparently its ok to animate accurate looking Egyptians, but not ok to cast them in live action. #BoycottExodusMovie." *Twitter*, 30 July 2014, 3:53 p.m.

Returning to Lefèvre's discussion, I use his comic example to situate context for his theories because it can easily be applied to books as well. The reception of film and comics differ, where a film is generally enjoyed socially with everyone in the cinema experiencing emotions together at one time, a comic is read individually with the amount of time a reader gazes at a panel at their own discretion and experiences only their own reactions to the story. However, a reading of the Bible is done individually in personal meditation and communally during a sermon. The issue of utilising sound in film dramatically effecting the "silence" of comics therefore need not be explored in the context of the Bible, since the Word is often spoken aloud in church services and incorporated into gospel music and hymns. I am not studying the adaptation of the Bible into music in this paper as my focus is upon visual adaptation devices. I will only touch on it to say that since sound is often attached to the experience of the Bible, and in relation to film "sound is a powerful film technique, because sound engages a distinct sense mode and sound can actively shape how the spectator perceives and interpret the image" (Lefèvre 11). In *The Prince of Egypt*, composer Hans Zimmer wrote into his score a musical theme for God, and it first plays when Moses encounters God

for the first time at the Burning Bush (Zimmer "The Burning Bush"), which also the first miracle portrayed on-screen. And is used again during the last miracle – the parting of the Red Sea (Zimmer "Red Sea") (Chapman, Hickner and Wells, Director's Commentary 01:23:19-01:23:35). It is an effective means linking the images and sound of the film thematically, and providing an audible iconic signifier for the presence of God. During the climax of the Red Sea sequence, the Egyptian army pursuing the Israelites are about to overtake them. The camera then cuts to a low angle shot of the crests of the parted waves. Water starts rushing down the partitions and the God theme plays, signifying the hand of God at work to protect the Israelites, and not just fortunate timing.

Animation then lends itself easily to the portrayal of supernatural accounts of the Bible, because the medium visually depicts the miracles for the viewer. The effects are in the same medium and thus one avoids the unconvincing visual effects that plague their live-action counterparts. The reality of the biblical text in adapting it into a visual medium has always been idealised. Renaissance painters used the golden ratio and idealised composition in their portrayals of scripture, and not all the details were historically correct because they were commissioned to be enjoyed by the society of the time. Stylisation and poetic interpretation occur because, as stated before, the more familiar the text is to its audience, the more likely they are to identify with it. This practice continues in animation, and it is not contested because there exists no precedent in the mind of the view of what the scene would look like in real life. Their references are only depictions. Realistic details would have to be researched, and in terms of character design the Bible rarely gives information on what a character looks like. It does not make use of prose in its historical accounts, and details of character motivations are not always provided. In adapting the text, those things must be analysed and inferred from the text. The challenge then of adapting a biblical text is that of poetic licence against historical accuracy. Animation’s heavy reliance on icons as a means of communication make it a suitable mode of adaptation for the Bible. It is also a stylised medium and therefore shares common visual ontologies with historic still-media adaptations of the Bible.

CHAPTER 4: ANIMATION AND THE BIBLE – CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

This chapter will provide a discussion on the characters from DreamWorks's *The Prince of Egypt*, using Barthes's Connotation Procedures as a semiotic toolkit. I will first compare Moses and Rameses and provide a semiotic analysis on how their dynamic is reflected in the film's structure. I will then analyse the characters Hotep and Huy together in the sequence "Playing with the Big Boys Now".



Figure 23: Gustave Doré, *The Creation of Light*. 1866. (Wikimedia, 2011). Wood Engraving Print.



Figure 24: Claude Monet, *Impression: Soleil Levant*. 1872. (Musée Marmatton Monet). Painting.

The source text of the film is the account of Moses from the first fifteen chapters of the book of Exodus in the Bible. The film ends with Moses bringing the tablets of the Ten Commandments down from Mount Sinai, which is documented at the end of chapter 31 and the beginning of chapter 32 in Exodus. As stated earlier the film follows a coming-of-age story arc.

The Prince of Egypt Stylistic Overview

The film is visually rich and cites 19th century artist Gustave Doré's use of light in his etchings, Claude Monet for his handling of colour and place, and director Sir David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) for his "epic sense of cinema and scale" (DreamWorks Pictures *The Making of 'The Prince of Egypt'* 00:13:00-00:13:22) (Corliss) (Weinraub), as inspiration for the film's aesthetics (Figure 25). The use of light is masterful and full of semiotic signifiers, working in tandem with the use of colour to signify and increase Appeal.

Like Monet's paintings (Figure 24), the backgrounds are painterly, but not entirely impressionistic because the film operates in a strong mode of realism Figure 26). As stated in chapter 1, the Egyptians are coded by the colour blue with cool pastel hues for their

backgrounds. The rust red for desert and rugged terrain of the Midian scenes serves to counter the Egyptian aesthetic. This practice also reflects the major themes of the film as discussed in to the case studies below. Thomas and Johnston affirm that in animation "background, costume, character, and expression were all designed for a succinct statement" (23).



Figure 25: The scale of Sir David Lean's cinematography in was a source of inspiration for *The Prince of Egypt* (1998) from Sir David Lean (dir.), *Lawrence of Arabia* (Columbia Pictures, 1962). Film.



Figure 26: Sunrise over Midian from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film.

The animated motion of characters is very naturalistic, with few cartoonish movements because the film portrays several renowned and revered religious figures. The choice also serves to contrast between the miraculous accounts depicted from those of day-to-day life of the characters. This reflects one of the central themes of the film: the miracle of everyday life against the pomp and spectacle of a false sense of identity and grandeur. The naturalistic movements also set apart the miracles of God against the deceit of the Egyptian high priests, because the miracles were designed to behave like natural phenomena but moving in an unexpected manner (Chapman, Hickner and Wells, Director's Commentary 00:43:34-00:43:41). In contrast, the illusion of the high priests' performance is full of pomp and showmanship, their exaggerated silhouettes therefore coded to deceive.

The film therefore operates in a very strong mode of hyperrealism. However, the film's mode of realism tends to get in the way of audience identification. The historic setting, the epic scale of the narrative also contributes to this. To compensate, the film employs a Moses-centred focus over the God-centred narrative of the Bible. The audience is comprised of human beings and they therefore need to empathise with a human character in their struggles. This was discussed earlier with McCloud's theories on how humans attach identity to objects – a process essential to an audience's engagement with a character.

The historical context of the film means that there are no modern signifiers to help the audience identify the role – and therefore purpose – of each character. The film builds other signifiers into the narrative to help the viewer identify the role of each character. The Egyptian faces are very symmetrical, with arched noses and eyes shaped like hieroglyphs, with round or oval faces. To contrast, the Hebrews are more haggard in their appearance, with longer more square faces.

4.1 – CASE STUDY 1: MOSES AND RAMESES. THE SAME, BUT DIFFERENT

As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, the film uses Exaggeration and Appeal to contrast Moses and Rameses with one another. These contrasts increase in scale as the story progresses and therefore is an effective means of broadening the scale of the narrative, and both the external and internal conflict of the protagonist Moses. At the beginning of the film Rameses and Moses are in a reckless chariot race across the city towards the construction site of a new temple (Figure 27). The sequence establishes the levity, camaraderie, and competitiveness in their relationship, but also their irresponsibility. The scene is not in the book of Exodus, but is included to support the coming-of-age narrative structure. Establishing Moses' lack of responsibility in the beginning is a means to highlight his character development at the end of the film as the leader of the entire Israelite nation. Additionally, by showing the closeness of Moses and Rameses in the beginning of the film, it increases the level of conflict when they find themselves on opposite sides of the struggle for Israel's freedom. The scene is also a masterful blend of 3D backgrounds and chariots, with 2D character animation on top. The production team managed to composite the scene so that the style is uniform, and the Trick Effects do not reveal themselves, allowing the audience to completely engage with the narrative without distraction.

The chariot race ends with a quite literal defacement of an enormous statue of their father Seti's face, and the sandbanks beneath it flooding the temple. They are then reprimanded by their father in his palace (Figure 8), Rameses bearing the brunt of the lecture. The scene gives us insight into the responsibilities that Rameses must fulfil, but there is no mention of Moses' role in the future, and so there is little for him to be accountable for. Rameses, however, is potentially the "one weak link [that] can break the chain of a mighty

dynasty" (Chapman, Hickner and Wells, The Prince of Egypt 00:11:48-00:11:52), a phrase that haunts him in his reign as Pharaoh. There is a lot of foreshadowing and parallels being established in this scene, that serve as exaggeration to the narrative later in the film, and they are signed to the audience visually.



Figure 27: Moses and Rameses have a chariot race from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film.

One such signifier is Seti's left hand thrust out toward Rameses as he reprimands him. Shot using a Dutch angle at medium length, Seti's pose fills the frame and projects outward, his anger hitting the audience even as it is directed at Rameses because of the pose's exaggerated arc. The pose is given at the height of his lecture on responsibility and therefore is coded as Seti's power and authority as pharaoh. This signifier is confirmed later during Moses' dream sequence when Seti's hieroglyph points his left hand and his soldiers rush to execute his orders to kill the baby Hebrew boys. The gesture also becomes an icon throughout the film that is reiterated by Rameses when he becomes Pharaoh.



Figure 28: The hand of Pharaoh points to his sons (left), and orders his soldiers to kill infant Hebrew boys (right) from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film.

This beginning segment in Egypt that establishes the relationship between Rameses and Moses, also establishes the Appeal of the film. As mentioned before the film is visually stunning, full of the scale and evocative use of colour it aspired to from its influences, which

are reflected in the story elements of the narrative. However, the Appeal hinges upon the relationship between Moses and Rameses. By understanding their character motivations and backgrounds, we have greater insight into who they are as people. The chariot race and its consequences reveal to the audience that Rameses is a young man struggling with the legacy of his family, and ultimately the approval of his father. It is a very human trait that evokes the audience's understanding. He is not framed as the villain in the beginning, and his and Moses' antics together and affection towards each other make Rameses likable. The contrast to their relationship by the end of the film adds more tragedy for the characters on a personal level that ensures the audience's engagement throughout the epic miracles displayed throughout the film. Therefore, these repeated visual signifiers and contrasts become weightier.

The separation of Moses and Rameses – though visually signified to the audience from the beginning as mentioned in chapter one (Figure 8) – begins when Moses learns of his Hebrew heritage that very evening. His blood sister Miriam – coded as a believer in God by her openly blessing people and being the only one to name Moses "The Deliverer" – is the one to tell him. This is Moses' first test of faith, and he responds in complete denial. Moses' struggle with his identity is his main conflict for the first act of the film. He remains in denial until he finds the hieroglyphs in the palace depicting exactly what he saw in his dream sequence, confirming Miriam's proclamation. Distraught, he kneels before the hand of Seti ordering the death of the Hebrew boys (Figure 28), and yet it is that same hand that is placed on his head in an attempt to console him. Seti explains his actions and concludes that "they were only slaves" (Chapman, Hickner and Wells, The Prince of Egypt 00:26:20-00:26:22). The statement reveals his adopted father's bigotry to Moses and calls into question how Seti could love him as a son if he, too, were technically born a slave. Horrified, Moses withdraws from the hands of Seti, and therefore the power of Egypt that had killed so many, and his identity as an Egyptian begins to unravel as he runs away into the darkness. The darkness is neither red nor blue, and it reflects the ambiguous state of the allegiance of his identity.

While Moses has withdrawn and begun to disassociate from Seti, Rameses has begun to imitate him. Amongst the remains of the damage he and Moses dealt the temple the day before, Rameses is dressed in all white and wearing a nemes like Seti. When Moses finds him, Rameses announces that he is about to make the temple far greater than it was before. He has embraced his father's instructions to maintain the ancient traditions, and interpreted them to

bring more grandeur to the architecture of Egypt. Having been given the time to understand his motivations and insecurities – and therefore made such an Appealing character – the audience interprets his actions as misguided, not cruel. Moses is the one who has had the revelation of the level his father's cruelty, and it is from Moses' perspective that we are watching the scene. While Rameses has been explaining his plans for the temple, Moses cannot draw his eyes away from the slaves that are lumbering past with sacks of sand, cleaning up the mess that he and Rameses made of the temple the day before – and therefore neither can we. The scene is Staged to highlight for Moses the suffering of the Hebrews, and so the audience's sympathy for the Hebrews becomes more entrenched, and we see the cost of the Appeal of Egypt's grandeur. Slaves are whipped in front of Moses and he does nothing, but his inaction is beginning to disturb him. Rameses' voice fades to the background, an audible signifier that Moses is no longer listening to Rameses and his continued withdrawal from his adopted family. He notices his sister and brother, Miriam and Aaron, near an old slave being aggressively whipped by a slave master. He looks away but when Miriam speaks up to Aaron that they should do something about it, Rameses' voice is completely cut off and all of Moses' attention is upon the slave. The door to Moses' identification with the Hebrews is opening wider, while his Egyptian identity is fraying. Each hit of the whip is dealt faster and faster, the old man's cries ringing louder and louder, the camera cutting closer and closer to his face. The audience cannot look away from the man's suffering, the camera forcing the action upon them, the camera's signs staging our sympathy directly towards him, and therefore all the Hebrews. Moses stumbles into action, running toward the slave master to grab his whip, but in his haste to save the slave, he ends up pushing the slave master off the scaffolding, and he falls to his death. Horrified at his actions, Moses begins to flee into the desert.

I said earlier that the characters are the primary means of audience identification, but this scene uses action-based semiotics and staging to draw our sympathy toward the Hebrews and away from the Egyptians. Moses and Rameses are but vehicles – Objects – for this shift. This is because this scene is where Moses identifies as a Hebrew, but he has not yet embraced it.

Rameses implores Moses to stay, but Moses cannot be in Egypt. His father's cruelty and the guilt of his crime causes him to flee into the desert. As he leaves there is an inversion of the sign of Seti's authority. Rameses extends his right hand out toward Moses as he runs

away from him, his palm upward and beseeching. It signifies that while he may be imitating his father, his transformation into Pharaoh is not complete. His love for his brother and heartbreak is obvious, and he cries out Moses' name as he runs away. Moses only turns to say goodbye, and then continues to run. This last encounter in their adolescence is resignified at the end of the film, when the Hebrews have crossed the Red Sea safely, and Rameses has washed up on the rocks on the far side of the sea. He cries out Moses' name, and again Moses says goodbye, but it is resignified as the end of their relationship. By this point his and Moses' relationship is completely broken. Each plague hardened Rameses' heart toward the Hebrews, creating more and more distance between the two, culminating in Rameses sending his army after the Hebrews into the Red Sea, completing his transformation into Pharaoh (Figure 29). But instead of being the grand leader of Egypt he envisioned, his own flaws brought the ruin of his father's empire that he feared most. Rameses has resignified the hand of Seti to that of a broken Empire.

By taking time in the beginning of the film for the audience to understand the characters of Moses and Rameses, the film's production team have increased the Appeal of the characters and of the narrative. It makes the emotional beats between the two of them resonate amid the epic proportions of the story. By highlighting the humanity, rather than iconicity of the two men, the film is "presented in terms of universal understanding directly related to a person's experiences" because "the most important experiences are the individual's own" (Thomas and Johnston 535). By resignifying visual signs, the film uses "composition of memory" (McCloud 115) to echo back and forth between the two main characters and thus an audience would understand their emotional arcs, even as the scale of the miracles and power structures increase.



Figure 29: Direct signification of Seti's authority and cruelty upon Rameses (left), which is fully embraced by Rameses when he sends his army to kill the Hebrews (right) from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film.

4.2 – CASE STUDY TWO: PLAYING WITH THE BIG BOYS NOW

This section provides an analysis on the characters Hotep and Huy, the two Egyptian priests that serve under Pharaoh. The "Playing with the Big Boys Now" sequence utilises more of animation's plasticity and non-realistic properties, which are coded into the two priests, as explained in the analysis below.

Comparatively, the rest of the film's characters have realistic proportions and move in a very naturalistic way, but the designs of Hotep and Huy have a strong sense of Exaggeration in their proportions and form. The Exaggeration and Squash and Stretch in their designs allows one to distinguish between them: Hotep is short, rotund with rounded features; Huy is tall, skinny with pointed features and a very angular design (Figure 30). The stark contrast in their designs is also all about Appeal, and therefore meaning-making. Chubby characters seem more trustworthy to the audience, and skinny characters are treated with suspicion because by the visual codes of animation we have come to expect them to be evil. These qualities are reflected in their characters. While both priests as disdainful towards Moses, Hotep is more passive aggressive toward him, but Huy is more derisive in his attitude. When they both approach Rameses to broach the subject of Moses' crime of killing an Egyptian being yet unpunished, before Hotep can explain what the law demands, Huy yells "death!". Hotep finishes with a "we hesitate to say" to try and soften Huy's obvious contempt.

These exaggerated contrasting designs are also a code commonly used in animation to help the audience differentiate between those in a comedy duo, like Laurel and Hardy. This coding is enforced because they are both voiced by actors whose filmography is predominantly comedic: Steve Martin voices Hotep, and Martin Short is the voice of Huy. This is a common practice in Western animated productions since Robin Williams voiced the Genie in Disney's *Aladdin* (1992). As stated earlier, Hotep and Huy are also the victims of several of Rameses and Moses' pranks, providing comedic levity to the drama. However, their contempt for Moses and leering smiles – a signifier of evil and one that is repeated often – codes them as antagonists too. Huy's voice is also sibilant, hissing at Moses and further signing his antagonism. However,

the film's use of semiotics continually undermines the audience's ability to take them seriously by coding them as comic relief.



Figure 30: The priests Hotep (left) and (Huy) from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film.

Hotep and Huy's exaggerated character designs code their bodies as plastic, and in the "Playing with the Big Boys Now" sequence, their plasticity of is in full effect. Their silhouettes and plasticity serve to emphasise the shapes they make in the sequence. However, as stated in the discourse section, their cartoonish movement emphasises both their purpose as comedic objects, and to subtly signify that their illusions are spurious. By animating the illusions in 2D, they are made subjective and part of the spectacle. This is a very interesting twist on the procedure of Trick Effects. Most of the miracles of God are animated in 3D with 2D overlays to help composite them into the painterly backgrounds and therefore are objective, and part natural world of the film. The miracles are not in the same medium as the characters, and yet by the way the animators have coded the Aestheticism of the film, they are "real".

The sequence begins with Moses' return to Egypt to fulfil God's mandate to ask Pharaoh to release the enslaved Hebrews. He and Rameses – now Pharaoh – have a happy reunion, however, Moses' request to release the Hebrews is done publicly amongst Rameses's court. As proof of God's authority, Moses' staff turns into a snake (Figure 31) – the transformation actively uses Leslie's "process of becoming", and is an example of animation's suitability to the adaptation to the Bible, allowing for high concept, supernatural accounts, "philosophy", to be "unearth[ed]" by animation (Leslie 24).



Figure 31: Moses' staff transforms into a snake from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), The Prince of Egypt (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film.

Rameses is unfazed by the display, and his reaction is to have the priests show the power of the Egyptian gods Rameses serves, and therefore the power of Rameses, and that of Hotep and Huy. In this sequence, they are no longer the victims of Moses and Rameses's pranks, but artful showmen, displaying their power. They motion for the blinds of the hall to be closed, giant mirrors positioned by slaves are moved to focus the light upon them and set the stage for their performance (Figure 32).

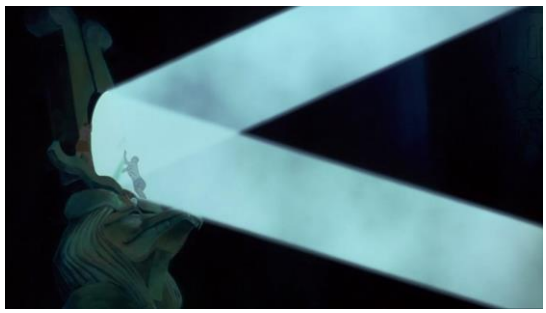


Figure 32: The use of stage lighting for Hotep and Huy's performance from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film.

The priests are silhouetted against the backdrop of the stage, and begin their song with very linear, twinned poses that mimic hieroglyphs, using Moving Holds to give the audience time to read their poses. This use of Pose breaks the rule of no twinning, but symmetry has been coded into the Egyptian hieroglyphs and the film's Egyptian world building, therefore it is strengthening the priests' connotation with Egypt for the viewer (Figure 33). However, their coding as deceivers is therefore also transferring onto the gods of Egypt. This transfer is

complete when Hotep uses his pose to point toward one of the statues of the gods of the Egyptian pantheon, which then fades onto a wall of hieroglyphs.

With sweeping arcs, they begin to contort their shapes, the Squash and Stretch in their bodies becoming more exaggerated as the sequence builds toward its crescendo. The pairs' poses still mirror one another's but they are more asymmetrical, which is reflected in the staging too. The camera shots become more oblique, using dramatic high angles, that dwarf Moses as he and the snake stand in the middle of the Egyptian pantheon of gods. The priests' gestures emulate those of a magician's, furthering their coding as showman in the scene. Furthermore, most of their tricks make literal use of smoke and mirrors, enhancing their coding as illusionists.



Figure 33: Evocative use of posing from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film.

The sequence also showcases their antagonistic feelings toward Moses. Hotep disappears behind a cloud of smoke shaped like fanged jaws, Huy behind a smiling curtain that transforms into a frowning maw (Figure 34), echoing their leering smiles from the start of the sequence, and signifying their antagonism to the audience. However, these signifiers are then undercut by their silliness in the sequence too. Hotep does the Bangles' famed "Walk Like an Egyptian" (1986) dance across the screen – another excessive signifier from the modern age – while wearing an Anubis mask, and Huy shadowboxes past him.

The priests eventually present their own sticks that have transformed into snakes, but the transformation is never seen. The sticks are in their hands and are smacked together to

produce a blinding flash of light. The camera cuts to Moses and Tzipporah's reactions and so we cannot guess what Hotep and Huy are doing, and then they emerge from the light carrying their snakes. Once more this implies trickery on their part, but it is masterful. At the crescendo of the sequence Moses' snake eats both of other snakes – which is true to the account in Exodus – signifying the inferiority of the priests' "power" in comparison to that of God. However, Hotep and Huy are too busy bowing and enjoying the reception of their performance to notice.

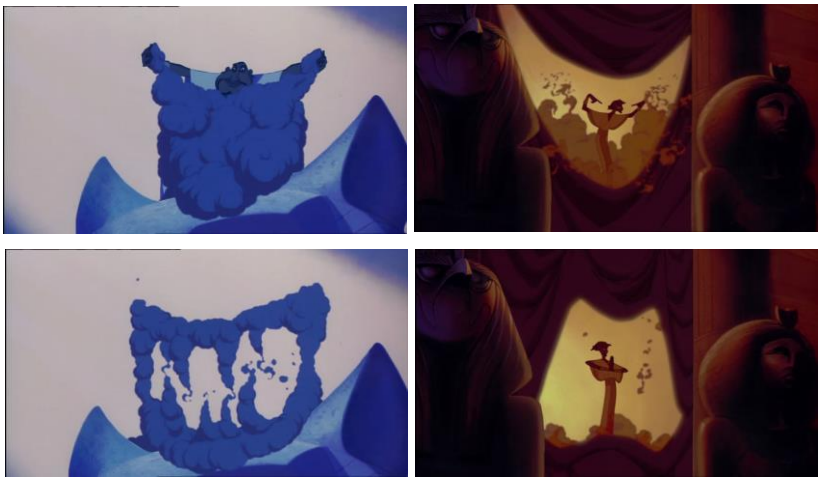


Figure 34: Hotep and Huy's performance uses smoke and from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film.

4.3 – CASE STUDY CONCLUSIONS

The film *The Prince of Egypt* makes effective use of Barthes's Connotation Procedures to signify to the audience. The Exodus text is full of signifiers, and while utilising those, the film also uses filmic codes in the adaptation of the story of Moses. The film's use of Aestheticism is visually stunning, with the principle of Appeal used across the production of the film, both visually and in the characterisation. It is a coming-of-age story and situates the relationship between Moses and Rameses as the icons through which we can identify with. As the size of the story increases, there is potential for the audience to dissociate with Moses, while still sympathising with the plight of the Hebrews. By revisiting memories and locations from the boyhood of the two men, this is avoided. It provides the emotional weight to remind the

audience of their humanity but also highlight how much of their dynamic has changed, thus they have not stagnated in their growth.

The characters Hotep and Huy operate more in the mode of hyperrealism than any of the other characters, because of the plasticity of their bodies. As such they engage more with the principle of Exaggeration than any other character in the film. The film both signifies and undercuts their antagonism by coding them as comedic. This is because they are directly associated with the gods of Egypt, one of the main stages of the discourse of the film: that of the supremacy of the Hebrew God Yahweh, over the “false” gods of Egypt.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This section outlines the research of this paper and thus attempts to draw conclusions to it. The section also discusses the potential value of my research and further research opportunities that may arise.

I opened the paper with the statement that this paper set out to study panel-based image story-telling techniques against those of animation, in order to find out why those visual adaptation techniques were used for biblical accounts so that my reader can see the significance of the long-established relationship between scripture and its visual adaptation, and how this led to its adaptation into animation due to its use of semiotics and gesture as communicators to its audience, and the representational devices inherent in the medium.

In order to answer my research question, "what are the benefits to using a movement-based visual medium like animation?" I then overviewed how biblical literature is adapted into visual media before comparing and contrasting the traits and visual ontologies of still- against movement-based media. I concluded that animation and comics bear many similarities in how they communicate with viewer because they are both stylised mediums. As such they both share similar traits in Appeal, and both privilege the "idea of form" (McCloud 41), allowing for more conceptual and abstract ideas to be portrayed. Stylised still-media and animation have fewer issues in adaptation because the style can be maintained.

I discussed how animation's stylisation leads to the communication of meaning by providing a thorough analysis of the principles of animation within the frame of Barthes's six connotation procedures. The signification processes involved in the principles and their relationship to realism allows for a process of cinematic identification that is unique to animation. Animation's reliance upon icons for this identification process make it a suitable mode of adaptation for the Bible. It is also a stylised medium and therefore shares common visual ontologies with historic still-media adaptations of the Bible. These, I believe and have illustrated to be the benefits of animation as a medium of adaptation

However, these icons – and the meaning they convey – also rely upon a context to be understood. Understanding and analysing that context is the other half of the theory of

representation and meaning-making. I discussed the importance of discourse in representation because it reflects the cultural values of the time. It also helps one understand if there are any messages coded into the text because of the power structures that moulded it.

I analysed the adaptation of the Bible and concluded that animation lends itself easily to the portrayal of supernatural accounts of the Bible because the medium visually depicts the miracles for the viewer. The effects are in the same medium and thus one avoids the unconvincing visual effects that plague their live-action counterparts. In addition, the reality of the biblical text in adapting it into a visual medium has always been idealised. Stylisation and poetic interpretation of the text are not contested because there exists no precedent in the mind of the viewer of what the scene would look like in real life. Their previous references of the text are only depictions. The challenge then of adapting a biblical text is that of poetic licence against historical accuracy. To answer one of my research questions, "is there such a thing as a 'true to source' adaptation?" I did two case studies of the film *The Prince of Egypt* and found that in adaptation there are invariably embellishments and alterations made from the original source text. There are several reasons for this and they are related to the film's discourse. In adapting the Bible for a modern audience there are some ancient cultural practices that could potentially alienate audience members. Those responsible for the production of the film do want to make a profit off of it. They therefore want to avoid audience alienation and therefore change plot elements.

To conclude, the essence of my argument is that of Dudley Andrew's point that connotation without context reduces the film to its *signifiers* and not a text *containing* signifiers (74). Historically, biblical panel-based story-telling needed preceding and proceeding sequences to tell the story – the narratological context of the artwork. They also require an understanding of the visual signifiers of the works to be able to interpret the meaning of the panels and therefore the story. This is the representation I have researched in this paper, and this focus on iconographic communication and identification, I argue, is what has led to biblical still-media to be translated into animation. They are both image-based, sequential media, and while having a relationship to the text, they are necessarily language based because they can communicate through gesture. To quote Jon Demascus:

> The image is a memorial, just what words are to a listening ear. What a book is to the literate, that an image is to the illiterate. The image speaks to the sight as words to the ear; it brings us understanding … this importance extends also to the didactic purpose of the icon. (Weitzmann, *Introduction* 2)

I am also aware that this is a very personal research project and that I have endeavoured to research a topic that has application to a very specific genre. I believe my research has value because, as I have shown in this paper, animation bears a strong capability for storytelling that suits the Bible's strong emphasis upon action and visual metaphor. I have also detailed the elaborate communication processes involved in animated representation, which have bearing across any genre of animation.

Further research into the subject of biblical adaptation could be to compare and contrast the modes of realism and representation of live-action cinema, animated cinema and panel-based story telling. This may help to understand on a deeper level the visual ontologies of all three media, how they communicate with one another – if at all – and their individual connotation procedures.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Due to the differing mediums referenced in this paper, a glossary is necessary to distinguish what I mean with each medium I refer to. The primary animation technique discussed in this paper is drawn 2D animation produced in Western studios, and therefore this definition and context that I am referring to when I discuss "animation". For a thorough list of 2D animation media see Furniss (2007) *Art in Motion: Animation Aesthetics*.

Still-image: as simple as a single image. Sequential art is included in the definition of a still-image because its frames are juxtaposed rather than projected or transmitted in sequence. Moving-image: media that employs the rapid succession of projected or transmitted frames to create the illusion of a subject in action. The definition includes live-action film, animated film, and motion graphics.

Created/constructed image: Any visual media whose image is not a direct denotation of reality – a photograph or film – but is entirely constructed will be referred to as a created image. Film grading and editing does not make a photograph a created image for the purposes of this paper. A distinction needs to be made because this paper mainly discusses non-photographic media. The created image includes photo collage images because it is a technique often employed artistic imagery and is sometimes employed in animation.

Due to digitisation, the distinctive stages of Barthes's *Connotation Procedures* are not as useful. Even my grouping of his procedures into production and post-production have a measure of fluidity between the two.

The mise-en-scène is an important part of Staging. Camera codes frame the objects while lighting and colour provide the shot with its mood and tone to support the desired effect. In modern animation practice lighting is also considered part of staging in the animation principles and is planned in the pre-production process of 2D and 3D projects, but is usually only executed after the animation phase. However, in stop-motion productions it is generally executed in-camera. Not all projects follow this workflow, and not all animation styles are suited to it either. However, lighting can still be edited digitally in post-production for these projects.

APPENDIX I

The following appendix provides a list of the twelve principles of animation as proposed by Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston in the *Illusion of Life* (1981) pages 47-69. Additionally, the section provides more explanation and relevant examples of the principles that were not expanded upon in the main body analysis of my paper. Most of these examples come from animator Richard Williams's book *The Animator's Survival Kit* (2001), a seminal manual for practitioners of animation.

1) Staging

In providing clarity of an idea, Staging umbrellas several factors in the presentation of an animated shot in order to guide the viewer's eye to see and therefore process the idea being presented (AlanBeckerTutorials 00:00:23-00:00:27) – AlanBeckerTutorials (2015) uploads YouTube videos on the principles of animation based upon the readings of Thomas and Johnston. In Staging the position of the main action is usually in the centre or on one of the thirds of the screen (AlanBeckerTutorials 00:00:59-00:01:05), as illustrated in Figure 35.

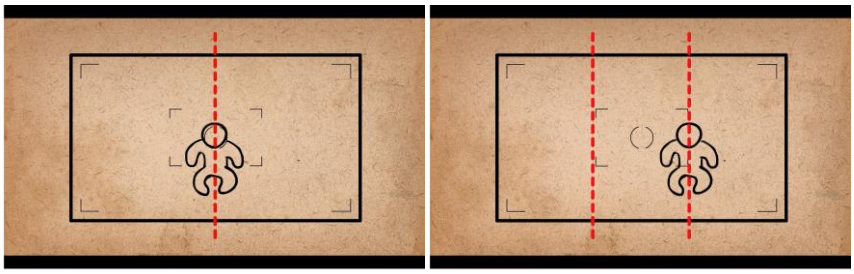


Figure 35: Positions of main action from AlanBeckerTutorials "3. Staging - 12 Principles of Animation" (2015). YouTube video.

The pose of the character is also to be staged so that their actions are discernible, but also provide emphasis on the emotion of action (AlanBeckerTutorials 00:00:49-00:00:59). Shading in the pose's silhouette is a helpful way to see its effectiveness. In Figure 38 below, drawing the pose from the side allows for the viewer to see what the man is holding as he kneels, but also creates an upward diagonal, drawing the eye from his pose, to the flower, and finally to her reaction. Staging his pose from the front, as seen on the right-hand side of the figure leaves more ambiguity in the intention of the action.

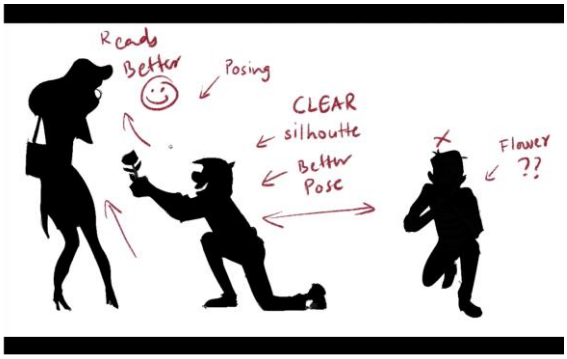


Figure 38: Staging silhouettes from Dsource Ekalpa India "Principles of Animation – Staging" (2016). YouTube video.

The main action its subsequent reaction cannot occur simultaneously. The main action must happen before the reaction, with enough time given to each for the audience to process what they are seeing (AlanBeckerTutorials 00:01:13-00:01:27). Periphery animation should not distract the viewer from the main action on-screen (AlanBeckerTutorials 00:01:16-00:01:23), like on the far right-hand side of Figure 37.

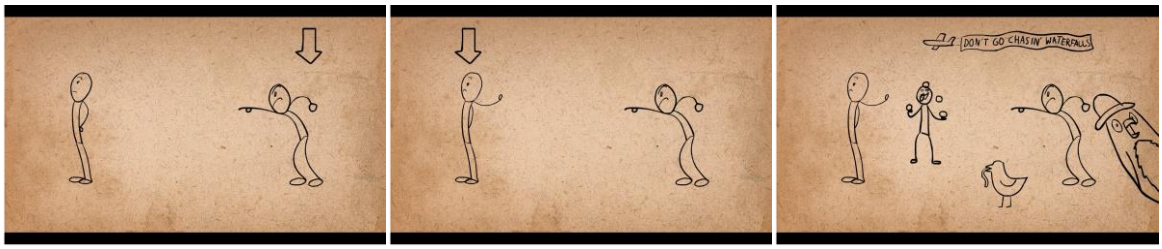


Figure 37: The first action (left), its reaction (middle), and periphery distractions (right) from AlanBeckerTutorials "3. Staging - 12 Principles of Animation" (2015). YouTube video.

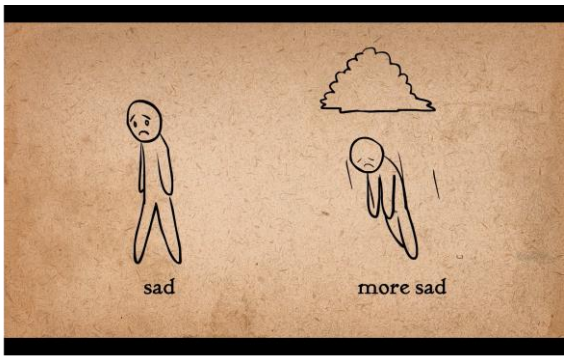


Figure 36: A slumped posture and a rain cloud emphasise the character's sadness from AlanBeckerTutorials "3. Staging - 12 Principles of Animation" (2015). YouTube video.

Part of ensuring understanding from the audience is to increase the intensity of emotion (Figure 36) and setting (Figure 39) (AlanBeckerTutorials 00:01:44-00:01:53). The intention of the artist in Figure 39 below is to show how decrepit the lounge is by increasing the state of disrepair from what it was (left), to the final drawing (right). This also meant eliminating details

that did not communicate that idea, like the television, globe, and certificate (middle) (AlanBeckerTutorials 00:01:49-00:01:56).

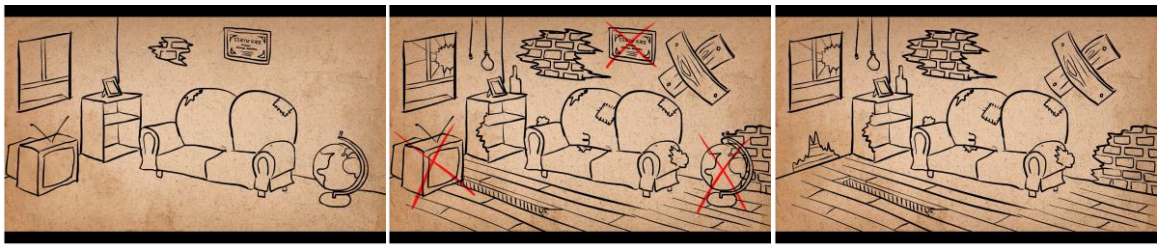


Figure 39: Exaggerating a setting helps to convey a specific idea from the animator to the audience from AlanBeckerTutorials "3. Staging - 12 Principles of Animation" (2015). YouTube video.

2) Straight Ahead Action and Pose to Pose

These are the two prevailing methods of animating a sequence. In Pose to Pose animation key drawings for the sequence are planned first (Figure 40 top), before the frames between the keys are drawn (Figure 40 bottom) (Thomas and Johnston 56).

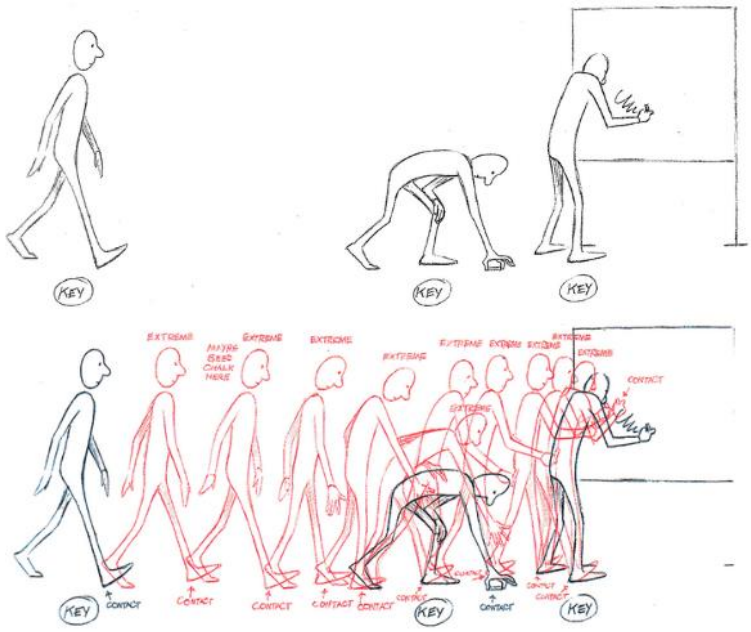


Figure 40: Pose to Pose animation key drawings (top), the frames between the keys drawn in (bottom) from Richard Williams, The Animator's Survival Kit (Faber & Faber, 2001), p.64-65. Book.

In Straight Ahead Action the animator draws each frame for the sequence without prior planning of key drawings (Figure 41) (Thomas and Johnston 56).

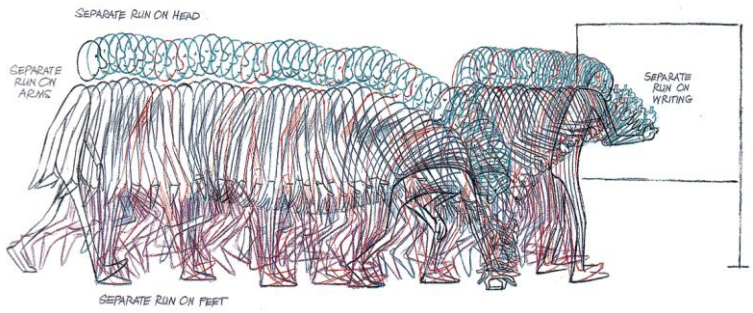


Figure 41: Individual frames a drawn sequentially for a Straight Ahead animated sequence from Richard Williams, The Animator's Survival Kit (Faber & Faber, 2001), p.66. Book.

3) Slow In and Slow Out

The beginning and end keys of a sequence are known as "extremes", and the frames between them are called "inbetweens" (Thomas and Johnston 62). "By putting the in-betweens close to each extreme and only one fleeting drawing between, the animator achieved a very spirited result … This was called Slow In and Slow Out, since that is the way the inbetweens were timed" (Thomas and Johnston 62). As illustrated in Figure 42 below both coins have the same timing, but by applying Slow In and Slow Out to the spacing of the second coin a very different movement as achieved, one that emulated most organic motion (Thomas and Johnston 62).

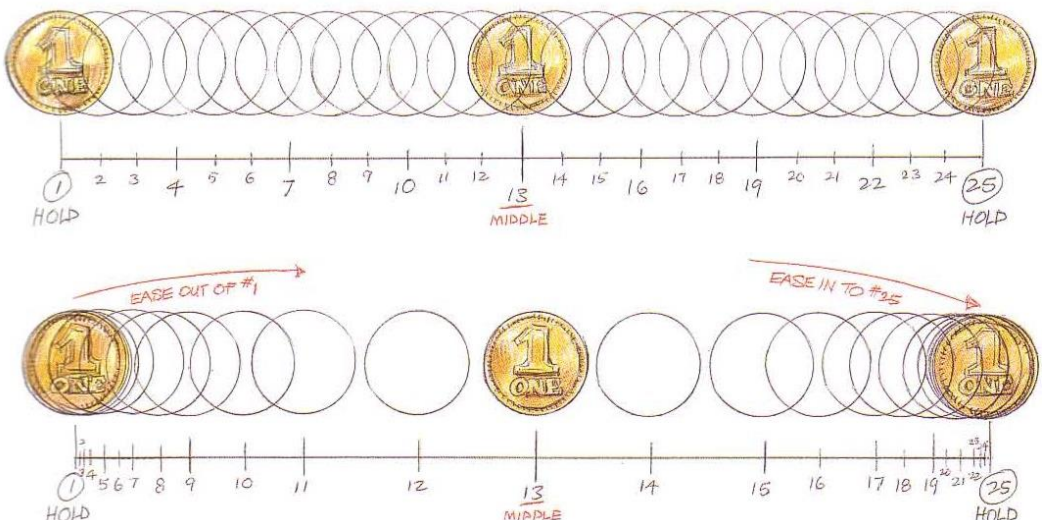


Figure 42: A coin travels at constant speed (top), another coin builds up speed and then slows down (bottom) from Richard Williams, The Animator's Survival Kit (Faber & Faber, 2001), p.38. Book.

4) Timing

Timing refers to the number of frames dedicated to a movement. In Figure 43 below the pendulum on the left has fewer frames – only seven – than the right pendulum – with nine frames. The left pendulum therefore will move faster than the right. According to Thomas and Johnston, a change in Timing of an action communicates different attitudes, e.g. "lethargic, excited, nervous, relaxed" (64). Timing also coveys the personality of the character, which were "defined more by their movements than their appearance" (Thomas and Johnston 64).

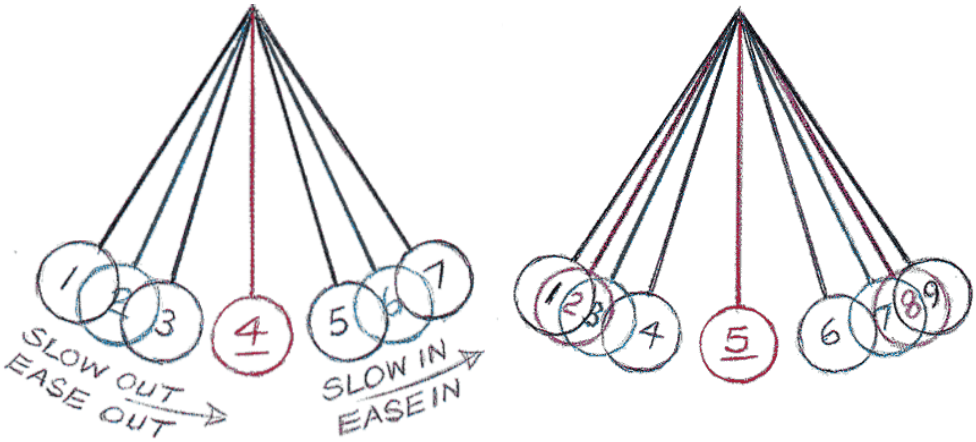


Figure 43: Two identical pendulums have different Timings from Richard Williams, *The Animator's Survival Kit* (Faber & Faber, 2001), p.50. Book.

5) Anticipation

Is "the preparation for an action" (Williams 274) for the audience so that they can see "what is going to happen – they see the anticipation and so they anticipate it" with the animator (Williams 274). This preparation is done by "preceding each major action with a specific move" to ensure the audience can understand the actions on-screen (Thomas and Johnston 51). In Figure 44 below, the hips of the baseball player push backward first, a small anticipation for most of the body to lean backward, which anticipates the throw, the main action

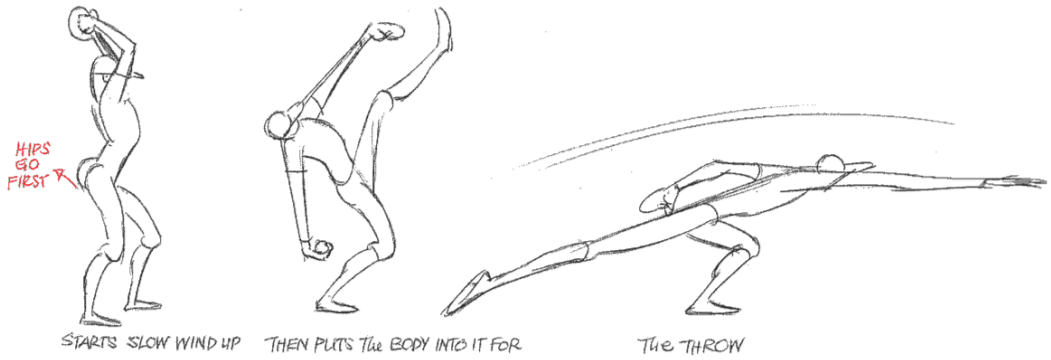


Figure 44: A baseball player's throw illustrates the principle of Anticipation from Richard Williams, *The Animator's Survival Kit* (Faber & Faber, 2001), p.275. Book.

6) Squash and Stretch

Put simply, it is the manipulation of the volume of a character, because "anything composed of living flesh, no matter how bony, will show considerable movement within its shape in progressing through an action" (Thomas and Johnston 47-48). This natural tendency in organic creatures is exaggerated in animation to create believable expressions and poses in characters, but it also helps communicate the properties of the mass of the character or object. A water balloon will stretch as it falls, and squash as it lands, but a bowling ball would maintain its shape. The use of squash and stretch while keeping the overall volume constant allows for a neutral face (Figure 45 far left) to have varied expressions (second from left, to right).

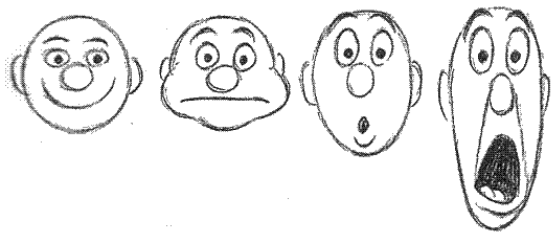


Figure 45: Squash and Stretch help provide rich emotion in a character from Richard Williams, *The Animator's Survival Kit* (Faber & Faber, 2001), p.250. Book.

7) Exaggeration

As discussed in Chapter 2, Thomas and Johnston describe Exaggerated movements as "a caricature of realism" (65-66), and not a distortion of it. Exaggerated actions, according to Johnston and Thomas are more convincing in animation, rather than those that are rotoscoped or drawn to imitate life more accurately (323). Exaggeration is applied across all the principles because it helps to effectively communicate ideas, emotions, actions, setting, and personality

to the audience. In Figure 39 above, applying Exaggeration to Staging helped convey the sense of the set's dilapidation.

8) Follow Through and Overlapping Action

The five elements of Follow Through and Overlapping Action are as follows (Thomas and Johnston 59-62):

i) Appendages on a character continue movement after the character stops

ii) "Held" poses: the head, chest and shoulders arrive into the pose first (in most cases), and the rest of the appendages arrive in the pose afterward

iii) "Drag": loose flesh on a figure move slower than skeletal or muscular parts of the character

iv) "Follow Through": the completion of an action (Thomas and Johnston 61), and it is as important in communicating the intent of the movement as its Anticipation and the action itself. In Figure 46 below, the elephant's frustrated kick turns into a fall, this is the action's Follow Through, thus he is transformed from stroppy to pitiful.

v) Moving Hold: a combination of all the elements of Follow Through and Overlapping Action. To allow the audience time to absorb an attitude, the pose of the character, its pose is kept on-screen for over eight frames. To avoid stillness the pose becomes more exaggerated as time progresses. See Figure 16.

In Figure 47 below, the ears and jowls of the dog employ drag (iii) and continue to move after the dog's head finishes its turn (i) and is therefore also the dog's held pose (ii).

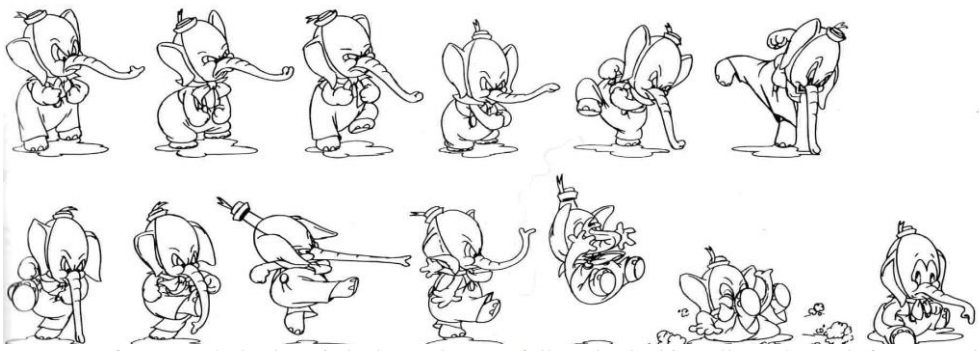


Figure 46: A frustrated elephant's kick results in a fall in the kick's Follow Through from Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, *The Illusion of Life* (Walt Disney Productions, 1981), p.61. Book.

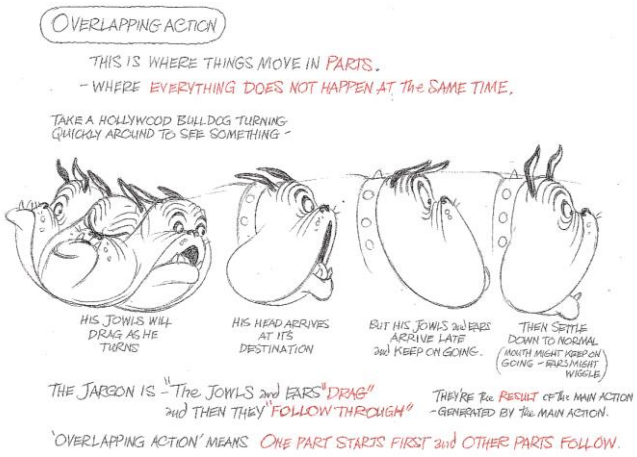


Figure 47: A surprised bulldog illustrates many of the elements of Overlapping Action and Follow Through from Richard Williams, *The Animator's Survival Kit* (Faber & Faber, 2001), p.226. Book.

9) Arcs

The limbs of organic creatures move in circular motions (Thomas and Johnston 62), and according to Williams "most actions follow [an arc]" (90), and "the arc of the action gives us the continuous flow" (91) of the movement (Figure 48).

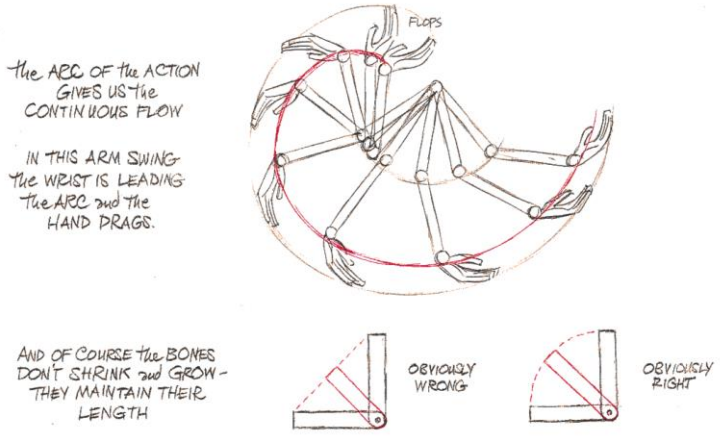


Figure 48: The natural arc produced by a fulcrum (bottom) and a swinging arm (top) from Richard Williams, *The Animator's Survival Kit* (Faber & Faber, 2001), p.91. Book.

10) Secondary Action

Secondary Action is the "extra business" that provides the audience with the information of the mood and mind-set the character is in when completing the main action (Thomas and Johnston 64). It creates "a fuller dimension to the personality of the character" (Thomas and Johnston 64) by supporting the main action of the character. In Figure 49 below,

Grumpy's main action is stomping away, and the large swing in his arms and fisted hands intensify the action and communicate his anger, even when his expression is hidden.

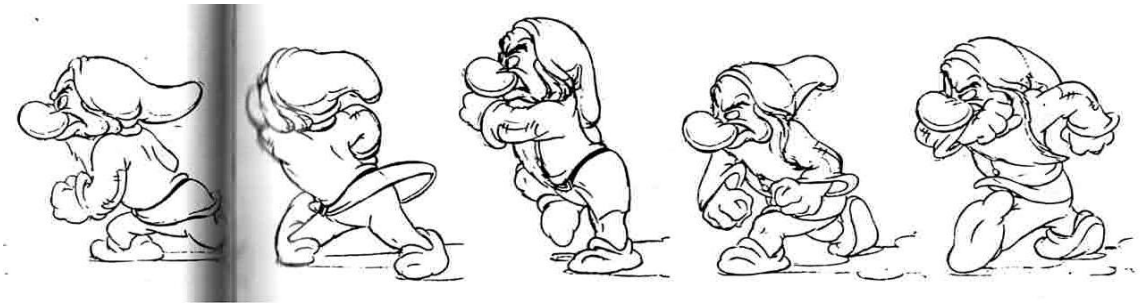


Figure 49: Grumpy stomps away from Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, The Illusion of Life (Walt Disney Productions, 1981), p.135. Book.

11) Solid Drawing

The consideration of the "weight, depth and balance" (Thomas and Johnston 67) of the drawing, and the ability to draw the character "in all positions and from every angle" (Thomas and Johnston 66). A character should look stable on the page, and the weight of objects must be conveyed in the performance. Avoiding twins in poses is allows for a drawing to look "solid". In Figure 50 below, Micky's pose on the left looks as though he is about to fall over (left). By removing the twins from the pose and changing its staging, he looks "more natural simply because each part of the body varies in some way from the corresponding opposite part" (Thomas and Johnston 67).

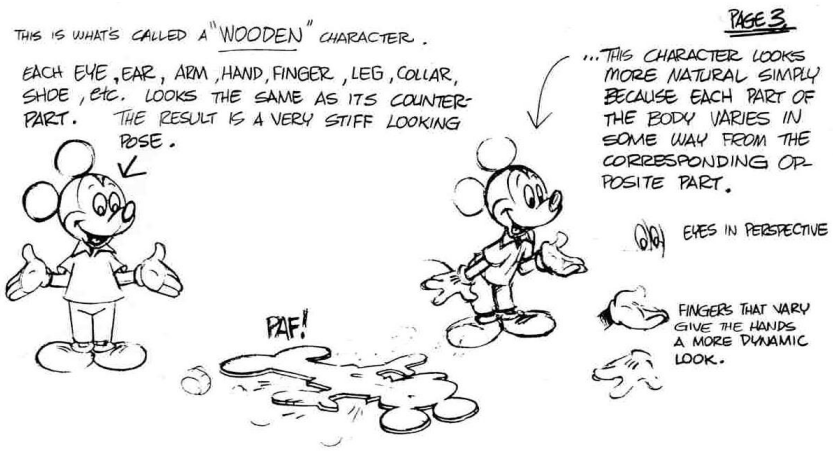


Figure 50: Symmetrical poses lack vitality and make a character look unstable from Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, *The Illusion of Life* (Walt Disney Productions, 1981), p.67. Book.

12) Appeal

"Anything that a person likes to see, a quality of charm, pleasing design, simplicity, communication, and magnetism. Your eye is drawn to the figure that has appeal, and, once there, it is held while you appreciate what you are seeing" (Thomas and Johnston 68). Appeal provides "the building of character [and] identification with the situation that will be needed" in the animated film (Thomas and Johnston 68). As discussed in this paper, Appeals is the primary means of viewers identifying with characters and investing in their story in an animated film.

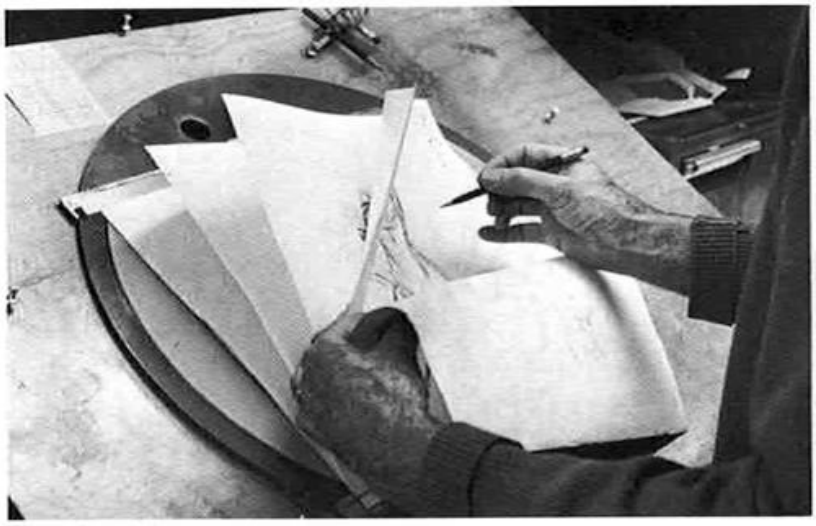


Figure 51: An animator "rolls" through the drawings of an action to review the relationship between them from Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, *The Illusion of Life* (Walt Disney Productions, 1981), p.31. Book.

APPENDIX II

The following is a schematic breakdown of Roland Barthes's three messages and their respective semiotic structures, that he proposed in his book *Image Music Text* (1977).

To explain how one draws meaning from the photographic image, Barthes theorises that there are three messages communicated to the viewer in order to signify a constructed meaning to them (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 36). The first is linguistic, the second the denoted, and the third connoted (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 37)

1) The linguistic message

Rarely do we find an image unaccompanied by text (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 38), and the language used has its own connotations that influence the meaning interpreted by the viewer. Historically, when words and images were combined, the literature was the primary text and source of connotation (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 25). The image illustrated the text to help clarify the text or condense the text to its essential connotations.

According to Barthes, the current relationship between the text and the image has reversed. The text amplifies the image while also serving to "sublimate, patheticize or rationalise" the connotations drawn from it (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 25-26). The text "quickens" this meaning to interpretation (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 25), and it echoes back to the reader. Thus "burdening [the image] with a culture, a moral, an imagination" (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 26).

2) The denoted message

This is the literal image as presented to us. The literal objects that comprise the image are called signs. Barthes proposed six *Connotation Procedures* by which the processes involved in constructing the denoted message during the various stages of film production to influence the third message drawn from the final image.

3) The connoted message

The cultural meaning the viewer interprets from the image is the connotative message. The connoted message adopts the signs of the denoted message to make them its own signifiers. Therefore, the denoted message appears to support what is being signified in the image (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 37). "The photograph allows the photographer to conceal elusively the preparation to which he subjects the scene to be recorded" (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 21).

Some denotations are without connotation. What distinguishes the second message from the third is that it "associates elements without any system" (*Image Music Text* 51), and therefore the connotated is naturalised by the denoted, making "[innocent] the semantic artifice of connotation" (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 45). Simply by watching that which is somewhat realistic to us, we readily forget that we are being signed at.

The Connotation Procedures performed on the first message (denoted image) that induces the third message (connotated image) are as follows:

Trick Effects

The process of insertion – adding or removing an element (e.g. a subject or object) that was not in the original shot (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 21). To repeat Barthes:

> The methodological interest of trick effects is that they intervene without warning in the plane of denotation; they utilize the special credibility of the photograph – this, as was seen, being simply its exceptional power of denotation – in order to pass off as merely denoted a message which is in reality heavily connoted (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 21)

Objects

This procedure refers to the arrangement of objects in a shot, or the decision of what objects to shoot and which to leave off-screen (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 22-23). While objects are referents to contextualise the narrative on-screen, they are also "accepted inducers of associations of ideas" (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 22) because they "possess meanings" (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 23) that induce signifieds to the viewer, which they then

interpret through codes. The arrangement of the objects also induce signifieds (*Image Music Text* 22).

Pose

Similar to Objects, the posing of subjects in such a manner that they induce chosen signifieds in the viewer of the image, e.g. the subject's praying hands signify holiness (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 22).

Photogenia

The "embellish[ment]" of the shot both during and after the image is taken (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 24). This includes the editing the lighting, grading, exposure, and printing of the photograph.

Aestheticism

This procedure involves the use of classic artistic considerations – like line and composition – in imagery (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 25).

Syntax

When the viewer is presented with a sequence of images, it is the sequence in its entirety that forms the connotation. Conversely, each image in a sequence does not have its own individual connotation, but in fact the entire sequence bears one connotation (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 24-25).

To reiterate, in constructing the literal arrangement of the objects within Barthes's second (denoted) image has an impact upon the third non-coded image, the connotated one, which is the symbolic meaning read by the viewer (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 33-46). It is during Syntax that the audience interprets the second and third messages respectively. By constructing the image, the obvious meaning drawn from the third message is more readily interpreted – obvious being the intentional meaning, the one "which comes ahead … to seek me out" (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 54). The use of "aesthetic value [and] emphasis" "devastates ambiguity" (56) of the intended meaning of an image as chosen by the creators. According to Barthes the construction of pose and movement "does not distract but accentuates the meaning" (56), a trait, he asserts, of all art that employs realism.

WORKS CITED

@Marcohtx. “Apparently its ok to animate accurate looking Egyptians, but not ok to cast them in live action. #BoycottExodusMovie.” 30 July 2014, 3:53 p.m. *Twitter.*

Aladdin. Dirs. Ron Clements and John Musker. Walt Disney Animation. 1992.

“3. Staging - 12 Principles of Animation.” 31 January 2015. *YouTube*, uploaded by AlanBeckerTutorials. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-SXLaQGg50>.

Allison, Tanine. “More than a Man in a Monkey Suit: Andy Serkis, Motion Capture, and Digital Realism.” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 28.4 (2011): 325-341.

Andrew, Dudley. *Concepts in Film Theory*. Oxford University Press, 1984.

Atkinson, Paul. “Movements within Movements: Following the Line in Animation and Comic Books.” *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 4.3 (2009): 265-281.

Barthes, Roland. *Image Music Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. Fontana Press, 1977.

—. *Mythologies*. Trans. Annette Lavers. Paladin, 1972.

Chandler, Daniel. *Semiotics: The Basics*. Routledge, 2002.

Chapman, Brenda, Steve Hickner and Simon Wells. “Director's Commentary.” *The Prince of Egypt*. DreamWorks Animation SKG Home Entertainment, 2004. DVD.

Christophers, Kelly. “Realism in CGI Character Performance: A Comparative Study of the Evolution of Key-Framed Animation and Motion Capture Systems at Weta Digital Studios.” 22 August 2012. *WIRedSpace.* <http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/handle/10539/11778>.

“Everything Wrong with War For The Planet of the Apes.” 19 December 2017. *YouTube*, uploaded by CinemaSins. <www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_o_3suFk1o>.

Collins English Dictionary. *Definition of 'meme'*. n.d. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/meme>.

—. *Definition of 'whitewash'*. n.d. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/whitewash>.

Corliss, Richard. *Can a Prince Be a Movie King?* 14 December 1998. <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,989841-1,00.html>.

Cubitt, Sean. “Visual and audiovisual: from image to moving image.” *Journal of Visual Culture* 1.3 (2002): 359-368.

Desmond, John M. and Peter Hawkes. *Adaptation: Studying Film & Literature*. McGraw-Hill, 2006.

Dockterman, Eliana. *Let's Talk About Grand Moff Tarkin in "Rogue One"*. 20 December 2016. <http://time.com/4604996/rogue-one-grand-moff-tarkin-princess-leia-cgi/>.

Doré, Gustave. 1866. *The Creation of Light.* <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Creation_of_Light.png>.

DreamWorks Pictures. "The Making of 'The Prince of Egypt'." *The Prince of Egypt*. DreamWorks Animation SKG Home Entertainment, 2004. DVD.

"Principles of Animation - Staging." 18 March 2016. *YouTube*, uploaded by Dsource Ekalpa India. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTaZjHZq_2o>.

Eisner, Will. *Comics and Sequential Art*. Revised Edition. W.W. Norton & Company, 2008.

Eliade, Mircea. "The Sacred and the Modern Artist." *Art, Creativity, and the Sacred*. Ed. Diane Apostolos-Cappadona. Continuum, 1984. pp. 179-183.

Elkins, James. *On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art*. 1st Edition. Routledge, 2004.

"Hercules, Disney's Beautiful Hot Mess: a Video Essay." 3 October 2016. *YouTube*, uploaded by Ellis, Lindsay. <www.youtube.com/watch?v=KznZcK7ksf4>.

Evangelion: 1.0 You Are (Not) Alone. Dir. Hideaki Anno. Studio Khara. 2007. Film.

Exodus: Gods and Kings. Dir. Ridley Scott. 20th Century Fox, 2014.

"I, Tonya's Choreographer Breaks Down the Triple Axel Scene | Notes On A Scene | Vanity Fair." 14 March 2018. *YouTube*, Vanity Fair. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4uUiVDIqqmQ>.

Furniss, Maureen. *A New History of Animation*. Thames & Hudson, 2016.

—. *Art in Motion: Animation Aesthetics*. Revised. John Libbey Publishing, 2007.

Gaiman, Neil. *American Gods*. Ed. The Author's Preferred Text. Headline Book Publishing, 2013.

Grayson, Kent. "The Icons of Consumer Research: Using Signs to Represent Consumers' Reality." *Representing Consumers: Voices, Views and Visions*. Ed. Barbara Stern. Routledge, 1998. pp. 27-43.

Greatest Heroes and Legends of the Bible: The Garden of Eden. Dir. William R. Kowalchuk. Vivendi Entertainment. Impact Video, 2000.

Hall, Stuart. "The Work of Representation." *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*. Ed. Stuart Hall. Sage Publications, 1997. pp. 13-63.

Hercules. Dirs. Ron Clements and John Musker. Walt Disney Pictures. 1997.

I, Tonya. Dir. Craig Gillespie. LuckyChap Entertainment, Clubhouse Pictures and AI Film. 2017.

Jerslev, Anne. Introduction. *Realism and 'Reality' in Film and Media*. Vol. 1. by Jerslev. Museum Tusculanum Press, 2002.

Jevtic, Ivana. "Narrative Mode in Late Byzantine Painting: Questions it Raises about Sacred Images." *Actual Problems of Theory and History of Art: Collection of articles* 3 (2013): 195-199.

Kandinsky, Wassily. *Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art*. Ed. Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo. Trans. Peter Vergo. Vol. 2. G.K. Hall & Co., 1982.

Kilbourne, Russell J.A. "(No) Voice Out of the Whirlwind: The Book of Job and the End of the World in A "Serious Man", "Take Shelter", and "The Tree of Life"." *Adaptation* 7.1 (2014): 25-46.

King Kong. Dir. Peter Jackson. Universal Pictures, 2005.

Lawrence of Arabia. Dir. Sir David Lean. Columbia Pictures, 1962. Film.

Lefèvre, Pascal. "Incompatible Visual Ontologies?" *Film and Comic Books*. Ed. Ian Gordon, Mark Jancovich and Matthew P. McAllister. University Press of Mississippi, 2007. pp. 1-12.

Leslie, Esther. "it's mickey mouse." *Animation - Art and Industry*. Ed. Maureen Furniss. John Libbey Publishing Ltd, 2009. 20-25.

Looney Tunes. Warner Bros. 1930-1969.

"An Introduction to Roland Barthes's Mythologies - A Macat Literature Analysis." 13 October 2015. *YouTube*, uploaded by Macat. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GCzq8we-bI>.

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. HarperPerennial, 1994.

McKinney, John C. "Typification, Typologies, and Sociological Theory." *Social Forces* 48.1 (1969): 1-12.

Mikulak, Bill. "Disney and the Art World: The Early Years." *Animation: Art and Industry*. Ed. Maureen Furniss. John Libbey Publishing Ltd, 2009. 111-129.

Monet, Claude. *Impression: Soleil Levant*. 1872. Musée Marmatton Monet, Paris.

O'Meara, Franklin Thomas. "The Aesthetic Dimension in Theology." *Art, Creativity, and the Sacred*. Ed. Diane Apostolos-Cappadona. Continuum, 1984. pp. 205-218.

Pinsky, Mark I. *The Gospel According to Disney: Faith, Trust, and Pixie Dust*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.

Piolle, Guillaume. *North transept rose window.* 1235. Chartres Cathedral, Chartres. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chartres_-_cath%C3%A9drale_-_rosace_nord.jpg>.

RadioTimes. *How a Holby City actor brought one of Star Wars' most iconic characters back to life*. 22 December 2016. <https://www.radiotimes.com/news/2016-12-22/how-a-holby-city-actor-brought-one-of-star-wars-most-iconic-characters-back-to-life/>.

Robinson, Tasha, Chris Plante and Bryan Bishop. *Question Club: We throw down over Rogue One's CGI characters, choppy first act, and that damn blue milk*. 19 December 2016. <https://www.theverge.com/2016/12/19/14007330/question-club-rogue-one-star-wars-tarkin-cgi>.

Rogue One: A Star Wars Story. Dir. Gareth Edwards. Lucasfilm Ltd. Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, 2016.

Rohrer-Walsh, Jennifer. "Coming-of-Age in 'The Prince of Egypt'." *Screening Scripture: intertextual connections between scripture and film*. Ed. George Aichele and Richard Walsh. Trinity Press International, 2002. 77-99.

Sammond, Nicholas. *Birth of an Industry : Blackface Minstrelsy and the Rise of American Animation*. Duke University Press, 2015.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Dirs. David Hand, et al. Walt Disney Productions. 1937.

Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse. Dirs. Bob Persichetti, Peter Ramsey and Rodney Rothman. Columbia Pictures. 2018.

Story Time Jesus. n.d. 31 October 2017. <memegenerator.net>.

The Bible. New International Version Thinline Reference Bible. Zondervan, 2005.

The Bible. New Living Translation. Tyndale House Publishers Inc., 2015.

The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. *Chartres Cathedral*. 9 January 2014. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. 9 November 2017. <www.britannica.com/topic/Chartres-Cathedral>.

The Prince of Egypt. Dirs. Brenda Chapman, Steve Hickner and Simon Wells. DreamWorks Pictures, 1998.

The Simpsons. Dir. Mark Kirkland. Fox Broadcasting Company. 20th Television, 1989- . Animated Series.

Thomas, Frank and Ollie Johnston. *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation*. Walt Disney Productions, 1981.

TVTropes. *Trope*. n.d. <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/Trope>.

van Rijn, Rembrandt. *Christ in the Storm on the Sea of Galilee*. c. 1633. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.

"Why cartoon characters wear gloves." 2 February 2017. *YouTube*, uploaded by Vox. <https://youtu.be/3R3cvbLsbAk>.

Walsh, Joseph. *Rogue One: the CGI resurrection of Peter Cushing is thrilling – but is it right?* 16 December 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2016/dec/16/rogue-one-star-wars-cgi-resurrection-peter-cushing>.

War for the Planet of the Apes. Dir. Matt Reeves. 20th Century Fox, 2017.

Weinraub, Bernard. *A Cartoon's Dancing Teapots? Funny Camels? Not for 'Prince of Egypt'*. 14 December 1998. <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/12/14/movies/a-cartoon-s-dancing-teapots-funny-camels-not-for-prince-of-egypt.html>.

Weitzmann, Kurt. "Introduction." *Age of Spirituality: A Symposium*. Ed. Kurt Weitzmann. Princeton University Press, 1980. 1-5.

—. "Preface." *Age of Spirituality: A Symposium*. Ed. Kurt Weitzmann. Princeton University Press, 1980. vii-viii.

—. "Narration in Early Christendom." *American Journal of Archaeology.* 61.1 (1957): 83-91.

Wells, Paul. *Understanding Animation*. Routledge, 1998.

Williams, Richard. *The Animator's Survival Kit*. Faber and Faber, 2001.

Zimmer, Hans. *The Prince of Egypt Soundtrack*. https://open.spotify.com/album/5l7lj9nJbbTs0vCHhV0hVA, 1998. Spotify.

LIST OF IMAGES

Figure 1: North transept stained glass window of Chatres Cathedral depicting the glorification of the Virgin Mary photographed by Guillaume Piolle. 1235. Chartres Cathedral, Chartres. (Wikimedia, 2009). Stained Glass Window. 7

Figure 2: Rembrandt van Rjin, "Christ in the Storm in the Sea of Galilee" (1633). Painting. 9

Figure 3: Story Time Jesus is one of the many examples of memetic Jesus from: Meme Generator. memegenerator.net, 31 Oct. 2017. Internet meme. 10

Figure 4: An ungrateful Jesus opens his Christmas/birthday present from God from Mark Kirkland (dir.), Season 26, Episode 9: "I Won't Be Home for Christmas", *The Simpsons* (Fox Broadcasting Company, 1989 – present). Animated Series. 11

Figure 5: The creature Lilith hangs crucified beneath a laboratory from Hideaki Anno (dir.), *Evangelion: 1.0 You Are (Not) Alone* (Studio Khara, 2007). Animated Film. 11

Figure 6: CinemaSins (dir.), remarks upon the parallels between the character Caesar and with that of Jesus from "Everything Wrong With War For The Planet Of The Apes" (2017). YouTube video. 12

Figure 7: Adam and Eve sleep in the Garden of Eden from William R. Kowalchuk (dir.), *Greatest Heroes and Legends of the Bible: The Garden of Eden* (Vivendi Entertainment, 2000). Animated Film. 13

Figure 8: The distinguishing red and blue details of Moses and Rameses from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film. 18

Figure 9: Peter Porker's introduction sequence bears iconic references in its composition to *Looney Tunes*' signature opening and closing sequences from Persichetti et al. (dirs.), *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (Sony Pictures Animation, 2018). Animated Film. 20

Figure 10: Porky Pig's signature opening (top) and ending sequences saying his catchphrase "that's all folks" (bottom) from Friz Freleng (dir.), "Yankee Doodle Daffy", *Looney Tunes* (Warner Bros. Pictures, 1943). Animated Series. 20

Figure 11: Like T.D. Rice, a minstrel performing as a Jim Crow character (above) Sammond asserts that Mickey's costume, "makeup", and use of gesture make him a minstrel (below) from Nicholas Sammond *Birth of an Industry* (Duke University Press, 2015), p. 225. 25

Figure 12: The use of gloves to maintain the rubberhose animation style while providing articulate movement from Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, *The Illusion of Life* (Walt Disney Productions, 1981), p. 125. Book. 25

Figure 13: The character Hercules's kneeling to pray to Zeus is a more efficient means of communicating piety to a predominantly Anglo-Christian audience from Ron Clements and John Musker (dirs.), Hercules (Walt Disney Pictures, 1997). Animated Film. 29

Figure 14: Signifiers that reference modern attributes of celebrity status to situate the level of Hercules's fame in ancient Greece. Hercules as action figure (left), The Hercules Store (centre), and "Air-Herc" shoes (right) from Ron Clements and John Musker (dirs.), *Hercules* (Walt Disney Pictures, 1997). Animated Film. 30

Figure 15: Disney Studios' flour sack test to suggest emotion and attitude by volume manipulation from Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, *The Illusion of Life* (Walt Disney Productions, 1981), p. 125. Book. 38

Figure 16: An example of the Moving Hold from Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, *The Illusion of Life* (Walt Disney Productions, 1981), p. 61. Book. 40

Figure 17: Abstracting human features in stylised mediums allows for more viewers to identify with characters from Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (Harper Perennial, 1994), p.31. Book. 42

Figure 18: Rameses carries his dead son through a beam of light from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), The Prince of Egypt (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film. 47

Figure 19: The Law Library scene from Orson Welles (dir.), *Citizen Kane* (Mercury Productions, 1941). Live-action Film. 47

Figure 20: The human mind anthropomorphises even the most abstract of shapes from Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (Harper Perennial, 1994), p.32. 50

Figure 21: The Burning Bush from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film. 58

Figure 22: An example tweet from the internet #BoycottExodusMovie campaign shows the importance of representation in casting as well as scriptural consideration from @Marcohtx, "Apparently its ok to animate accurate looking Egyptians, but not ok to cast them in live action. #BoycottExodusMovie." *Twitter*, 30 July 2014, 3:53 p.m. 61

Figure 23: Gustave Doré, *The Creation of Light*. 1866. (Wikimedia, 2011). Wood Engraving Print. 63

Figure 24: Claude Monet, *Impression: Soleil Levant*. 1872. (Musée Marmatton Monet). Painting. 63

Figure 25: The scale of Sir David Lean's cinematography in was a source of inspiration for *The Prince of Egypt* (1998) from Sir David Lean (dir.), *Lawrence of Arabia* (Columbia Pictures, 1962). Film. 64

Figure 26: Sunrise over Midian from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film. 64

Figure 27: Moses and Rameses have a chariot race from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film. 66

Figure 28: The hand of Pharaoh points to his sons (left), and orders his soldiers to kill infant Hebrew boys (right) from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film. 66

Figure 29: Direct signification of Seti's authority and cruelty upon Rameses (left), which is fully embraced by Rameses when he sends his army to kill the Hebrews (right) from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film. 69

Figure 30: The priests Hotep (left) and (Huy) from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film. 71

Figure 31: Moses' staff transforms into a snake from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), The Prince of Egypt (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film. 72

Figure 32: The use of stage lighting for Hotep and Huy's performance from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film. 72

Figure 33: Evocative use of posing from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film. 73

Figure 34: Hotep and Huy's performance uses smoke and from Brenda Chapman et al. (dirs.), *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks Studios, 1998). Animated Film. 74

Figure 35: Positions of main action from AlanBeckerTutorials "3. Staging - 12 Principles of Animation" (2015). YouTube video. 80

Figure 36: A slumped posture and a rain cloud emphasise the character's sadness from AlanBeckerTutorials "3. Staging - 12 Principles of Animation" (2015). YouTube video. 81

Figure 37: The first action (left), its reaction (middle), and periphery distractions (right) from AlanBeckerTutorials "3. Staging - 12 Principles of Animation" (2015). YouTube video. 81

Figure 38: Staging silhouettes from Dsource Ekalpa India "Principles of Animation – Staging" (2016). YouTube video. 81

Figure 39: Exaggerating a setting helps to convey a specific idea from the animator to the audience from AlanBeckerTutorials "3. Staging - 12 Principles of Animation" (2015). YouTube video. 82

Figure 40: Pose to Pose animation key drawings (top), the frames between the keys drawn in (bottom) from Richard Williams, The Animator's Survival Kit (Faber & Faber, 2001), p.64-65. Book. 82

Figure 41: Individual frames a drawn sequentially for a Straight Ahead animated sequence from Richard Williams, The Animator's Survival Kit (Faber & Faber, 2001), p.66. Book. 83

Figure 42: A coin travels at constant speed (top), another coin builds up speed and then slows down (bottom) from Richard Williams, The Animator's Survival Kit (Faber & Faber, 2001), p.38. Book. 83

Figure 43: Two identical pendulums have different Timings from Richard Williams, *The Animator's Survival Kit* (Faber & Faber, 2001), p.50. Book. 84

Figure 44: A baseball player's throw illustrates the principle of Anticipation from Richard Williams, *The Animator's Survival Kit* (Faber & Faber, 2001), p.275. Book. 85

Figure 45: Squash and Stretch help provide rich emotion in a character from Richard Williams, *The Animator's Survival Kit* (Faber & Faber, 2001), p.250. Book. 85

Figure 46: A frustrated elephant's kick results in a fall in the kick's Follow Through from Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, *The Illusion of Life* (Walt Disney Productions, 1981), p.61. Book. 86

Figure 47: A surprised bulldog illustrates many of the elements of Overlapping Action and Follow Through from Richard Williams, *The Animator's Survival Kit* (Faber & Faber, 2001), p.226. Book. 87

Figure 48: The natural arc produced by a fulcrum (bottom) and a swinging arm (top) from Richard Williams, *The Animator's Survival Kit* (Faber & Faber, 2001), p.91. Book. 87

Figure 49: Grumpy stomps away from Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, The Illusion of Life (Walt Disney Productions, 1981), p.135. Book. 88

Figure 50: Symmetrical poses lack vitality and make a character look unstable from Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, *The Illusion of Life* (Walt Disney Productions, 1981), p.67. Book. 88

Figure 51: An animator "rolls" through the drawings of an action to review the relationship between them from Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, *The Illusion of Life* (Walt Disney Productions, 1981), p.31. Book. 89

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: New suggested groups for Roland Barthes' Connotation Procedures. Source: Author's Own 33

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many people that have helped me along this Masters journey. I am grateful beyond words to all of you, and this little section does little to express that, but I shall try nonetheless.

Thank you to the Wits School of Digital Arts for your generous backing of my research with a bursary, I deeply appreciate the support. And a special thank you to the School of Arts staff for going above and beyond to assist me.

To Ray Whitcher – thank you, thank you, thank you! I cannot say it enough. Your continued guidance, wisdom, encouragement – and especially your quirky comments – helped guide me through the trickiest parts of this paper. You are the awesomest of Rays, and I salute you.

To my wonderful husband, Phillip. When I first had the idea to do my Masters, you were the first person to tell me to do it. You have been so patient and understanding and so, so, so supportive through all my delayed deadlines and fits of Masters Grouchiness. I love you, thank you.

To my parents, thank you for opening my wings for me when I was too tired to fly, and leaving tea and snacks in my range of vision when I was in The Writing Zone. And to my sister Sarah, thank you for sending me *Rocky* videos just in the nick of time. “One step at a time, one punch at a time, one round at a time – that’s how winnin’s done”.

To aaaall of my in-laws: I’m so blessed to be a part of your family. Thank you for patiently waiting for this paper to be finished for that to happen. Thank you for your advice, and inappropriate humour. Ek’s baie lief vir julle, hoor?

To Tegan, Sean and Tracey for giving me a second cave to write in, and who didn’t mind that I ate all their leftovers in the fridge – encouraged it even! Thank you, bless you for your love, support, and prayers.

To Nikki, all the kisses and Russian potatoes for you. Thank you for the long chats and sodden walks on the frigid London streets. They made all the difference for me to finish this paper.

To Ivana Ries, my Krav Maga instructor. You helped me find my inner fighter, and so helped me fight my way through this paper.

To my spiritual family at Village Church Lonehill. Thank you for all your prayers, and listening ears. You helped lift my spirit.

And the greatest thanks of all goes to my Creator, Lover of my Soul, my Jesus. This paper is inspired by and written for you. The Visible Image of the Invisible God, who shows me good paths.