

**Representation and Narrative in Popular
Two-Dimensional Animation:
A Critical and Practical Investigation**

Natalie Dekel

poeticmind.co.uk

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of Leeds Metropolitan University
for the degree of MPhil.

January 2006

Abstract

Popular animation has expanded from its cinematic form into many areas of daily life, such as TV commercials, the internet, and packaging of food and clothes. Its broad popularity becomes significant as it uses its merchandise as a marketing strategy for the production of dreams. Viewers are encouraged to reconstitute themselves through consumption and identification with popular animated imagery. Although contemporary popular animation has entered a new stage in its development, where it is gradually losing its binary vision of good vs. bad, any process of change takes time. Hence the “old imperialistic commercial American” attitude is still observed in popular animation. This observation requires examination of the formal characteristics of popular animation that enable the animation industry to reproduce and distribute that ideology through its narratives. Whereas most literature concentrates on historic, commercial and industrial aspects of popular animation, my research focuses on the formal characteristics of popular animation as independent elements of animation film that connect animation films to new production technologies and the wider commercial strategies of popular media. During the production of my film, critical analysis was applied to practical conditions and observed how purely practical terms such as line and colour can shape an ideological discussion within a film’s narrative. My practice shows that commercial popular animation modes of production are more closely connected to independently produced experimental animation than is appreciated in the critical literature. Both the theoretical findings of a wide range of complex issues within the narratives of popular animation, and the practical findings of the subtlety and diversity within the actual production process suggest a fresh critical approach to contemporary popular animation. This, in turn, suggests the possibility of a new representational language that addresses a demand for more complex and subtle narratives.

Acknowledgements

A work is never the creation of a solitary individual but is a product of the collaboration of a few people whose thoughts and words circulate through the author. As I have ventured into the research, my supervisors, friends and family have offered me help, guidance and criticism. My sincere appreciation is expressed to Professor Guy Julier, whose guidance has been always excellent in its content and timing; Doug Sandle and Ron Brown for their advice and support; and Dr. Amikam Marbach, who was so generous with his time, knowledge and experience and initiated in me the love for research. To others beyond the academic system I am also grateful to Gil Dekel, my husband, guide and friend; my parents and parents in-law who were there at any time; Rav Yeremi Angyalfi, who has reminded us of the meaning without which my research would be meaningless; Etta McWhinnie, Veronica Lovell and Melanie Chan for their friendship and support; all the wonderful people who helped me with supporting materials and environments for my practice; and Guenter Plum for his patience and knowledge.

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Chapter 1:

Popular Contemporary Drawn Animation as an Academic Field of Inquiry

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Research questions

Popular drawn animation is at a crucial point of change. On the one hand, its history as a popular, drawn medium reveals it to be homogeneous in terms of characterisation, narrative and appearance. On the other, a new genre of popular animation is emerging that combines greater complexity and subtlety in these elements. This reflects wider social and cultural shifts toward more complex attitudes, but also the use of new production technologies. In either case, they both remain firmly connected to the wider commercial strategies of the popular media. How can popular drawn animation develop beyond the restrictions of its former visual and narrative languages while embracing this more complex and critical thinking in contemporary popular animation?

In order to address this question several themes are explored in this research that are essential components of that core issue and carry out:

- An examination of the ideological discourses that are embedded in popular narratives;
- An investigation into the meanings behind the formal and expressive characteristics within popular drawn animation;
- An analysis of popular animation's position as a film form within a cinematic practical (industrial) and theoretical context;
- A self-reflexive examination of my own practice drawing upon my work in general as an animator and upon the research animation project in particular.

Animation is a broad and heterogeneous category that results in a multitude of styles and a unique classification of animation. Its plurality of styles and its uniqueness make it difficult to analyse theoretically. A lack of theoretical analysis,

however, brings forth a lack of critical understanding of the medium. The majority of critical texts treat animation with regard to its role in advertisements and children's entertainment, thus assigning popular drawn animation a low status media. By conducting a thorough investigation into the ideological and industrial discourses of popular animation I intend to shift academic attention away from a concern with how these films were made to (aspects of) their social and cultural roles and their relationship with representational language.

My research recognises the complexity of the professional context of animation films. My practice addresses questions raised by the analysis of ideological discourses as well as acknowledges new questions raised in the actual process of animation filmmaking. Those questions have not yet been discussed in the academic literature on animation, pertaining to issues such as character development, narrative structure and self-consciousness of the artist in the process of animation film production. The practice of the filmmaking process helps to throw light on the issue of how the meanings behind the formal and expressive characteristics of popular two-dimensional animation are created. Whereas the analysis and contextualising of personal practice within the critical framework of popular animation provide answers to the question of how animation is situated as a film form in that discussion, the analysis of ideological discourses in popular animation and the answers yielded by the examination of personal practice help to answer the core research question regarding the likely development of popular two-dimensional animation in the face of contemporary changes both in content and technological application.

1.1.2 Central aims of research

The aims of the thesis are made tangible through focusing on a number of subjects of investigation to reach a deeper understanding of two problematic areas in popular animation: 1. the *appearances* that the popular animation industry uses to increase the commercial appeal of its products, and 2. the core *representational* ideas behind those appearances that bear ideological messages. These subjects will come to form the chapters of the thesis and help give it a coherent and logical structure:

- Identification and analysis of ideological discourses in popular drawn animation.
- Development of two-dimensional popular animation: its complex and subtle narratives, representation and modes of production from the perspective of a practitioner, i.e., as seen through personal practice.
- Identification of the position of the practitioner's personal practice in light of critical discussion.

1.1.3 Contemporary context of research

Considering the highly diverse range of techniques and the wide popularity of popular animation films, the fact that the academic literature on both the animation film industry and animation film itself only provides a partial analysis points to an important gap in the literature. This thesis presents an opportunity to fill this gap by synthesising the practitioner's perspective on animation filmmaking and the critical analysis and discussion of the popular animation industry and of animation film as a whole.

Significance of the research context in time

The crucial point of my research is that it takes place at a very important time of change in the popular animation industry, a change which in turn reflects global changes in contemporary society and culture.

In my research I use Anthony Giddens's book *Runaway World* (2000) as an anchor to the critical discussion of popular animation. My thinking about the global change that affects popular animation in terms of its narratives and representation is driven by Giddens's arguments in the book. This book is based on his radio lectures from 1999, which are a distillation of much of his 'deeper' academic writing for a more popular audience. In this book Giddens discusses five main themes: global capitalism, the meaning of risk, tradition, family and democracy and information society that rapidly evolves in the age of globalization. Giddens (2000:1) argues that

"We are living through a major period of historical transition." Globalization is reordering societies all over the planet, and although the results are sometimes unpredictable, they are heading in a generally positive direction. Giddens seems to be most interested in the transition and the differences from pre-modern (traditional) culture and modern (post-traditional) culture. The phenomena that some have called 'postmodern' are, in Giddens's terms, usually just the more extreme instances of a fully developed modernity. When tradition dominates, individual actions do not have to be analysed and thought about so much, because choices are already prescribed by the traditions and customs. This, does not mean that the traditions can never be thought about, or challenged. In post-traditional times, however, people don't really worry about the precedents set by previous generations, and options are at least as open as the law and public opinion will allow. Society becomes much more *reflexive* and aware of its own precariously constructed state. Giddens is fascinated by the growing amounts of reflexivity in all aspects of society, from formal government at one end of the scale to intimate sexual relationships at the other. Arguably, similar to Giddens's lines of inquiry, popular animation reflects on this social change by transition from binary or in Giddens's terms 'traditional' popular animation to multidimensional or Giddens's 'post-traditional' popular animation. We shall see later on how this transition occurs in popular animation.

Anthony Giddens's views regarding the historical transition taking place in contemporary society touch core elements in contemporary popular two-dimensional animation. Giddens (2000: 13) argues that many of these changes are bound up with globalisation, where information and images are routinely transmitted across the globe. People are therefore regularly in contact with others who think and live differently from themselves, and hence tolerance of cultural diversity has become more prominent, and influence is "pulled away" from local communities, nations and social institutions, such as family, religion, tradition and work, into a global arena. Thus the meanings and functional apparatus of those institutions are gradually altering while their surface appearance and names remain as before – they become what Giddens has called "shell-institutions". In the context of these changes contemporary animation films encourage viewers not merely to follow what they see, but to be aware of the inevitable changes within society and culture (Walsch,

2000: 109). A new genre of popular animation is emerging that combines greater complexity and subtlety in terms of formal and expressive characteristics, narratives and representation. The changes in those qualities of popular animation are closely linked to new production technologies which rapidly evolve animative appearances and ease the production of films, for example, with the help of CGI (Computer Generated Imagery) that change not only popular animation but feature films as well. These changes in popular animation clearly reflect the wider social and cultural shift that Giddens has spoken about.

This new approach reminds me of Quantum Theory, which illustrates changes and hybridity as an integral part of life, where one element can be itself and be another element as well at the same time. Einstein (1962: 144) acknowledges the fact that we live at a level whereby quantum effects are not visible – they are too minuscule. Nonetheless, I would like to use Quantum Theory in a metaphorical sense to explore changes in contemporary animation. Whilst quantum effects may be minuscule, they can have an enormous impact on the world we live in, and this drives my discussion. Similar to the ideas collectively known as Quantum Theory, “quantum attitude” in animation suggests that there is no presupposed structured behaviour, which has aspects of an “eternal morality”, something that was found in earlier entertainment products. In “quantum” or “multidimensional” animation, for example, in DreamWorks’s *Sinbad: The Legend of the Seven Seas* (2003), as in life in general, values are fluid and changeable, good can become bad and vice-versa. For example, the good and reliable king in Sinbad fails to “maintain his goodness”, and bribes guards in his own kingdom’s prison to secretly save his son who had been found guilty of a crime by the king’s own court. Similarly, love is not necessarily seen as the privilege of princes and princesses, but a natural attraction is found between a princess and a pirate. Contemporary animation therefore reflects the fluidity and uncertainty within contemporary society. There are no more archetypal heroes, and every character behaves in a more real, believable and simple way, for example, Sinbad, Homer Simpson, Shrek and Ant, Z in DreamWorks’s *Antz* (1998).

This new unstable, constantly shifting approach in animation film has evolved from previous attitudes that were characteristic of modern traditional society. Those

pre-quantum (binary) attitudes suggested that there are laws of morality by which human beings should live (Carroll, 2002: 10). These laws suggested that there are very clearly defined moral values, and that everyone should behave in a certain fashion, whereas anything contradictory and different was condemned as bad behaviour. This attitude was presented in animation through goodies and baddies, such as Disney's Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, who were presented as good guys who establish world peace and show the natives on the other continents what is good for them (Dorfman & Mattelart, 1984). This approach had clearly been shaped by political attitudes dominating at the time, despite the paradox that what is good could only be so in relation to that which is bad, which means good and bad are mutually defining. Billig (1997: 1) argues that in a similar way economically and politically dominant countries, mainly the US and Western European countries, have often assumed that what is considered to be good for them is surely good for the rest of the world as well. Therefore, many other countries with less power were forced into a kind of "re-education" so that they could become as good as their opponents. That re-education has been claimed to establish equality; however, that equality was not defined in terms of the same *freedom* for all but merely of the same *appearances*, while erasing any profound differences that might contradict this imperialistic approach. That attitude, Adorno (1991) notes, was very clearly supported by industrial development that presented the masses with fashionable food, clothing and possessions, all of which were identical.

Although it seems that global society has moved on from that binary type of thinking, any change is bound to be a process that takes time. Therefore, amongst contemporary multidimensional animation one may still find old-style films and narratives that are intermixed with the new ones. Currently, there is no clear division between the periods but the shift presently occurring is directed towards multi-dimensional animation.

Significance of the research from point of view of a practitioner

My research observes these changes from the point of view of a practitioner, from within the medium, while the process is unfolding. That is a unique perspective for

an analysis of popular animation, since most writers on popular animation fall into one of two main categories. One category is the academic writers who are not practitioners and who are not intimately familiar with the process of animation filmmaking. Another is the practitioners of popular animation who speak of their experience while lacking the experience of academic critical observation of narrative and process, whereas my research combines both aspects. This approach contributes a new perspective to the academic literature on popular animation.

1.2 Theoretical framework of research

1.2.1 Central assumptions in research

The thesis proposes several assumptions which form the basis of my choices in methodological approach, critical language and guidelines, all designed to help achieve the main objective of my research, which is to answer the question as to how popular animation can be developed further within its current industrial and commercial framework.

Popular animation as research limitation

Within the parameters of this thesis, I study mostly American popular drawn animation of the last 15 years that is displayed on television, occasionally brought to the cinema, and clearly has had a large impact upon Western animation. I have been calling that animation style of narratives and representation “multidimensional animation”. Such animation is characterised by its commercial inclination and is supported mostly by private companies, and in turn lacks academic research and analysis.

Most academic literature, such as Leslie (2002), Wells (2000), Furniss (1999) and Bendazzi (1994), focuses on films that were made by big American popular animation companies in the first half of the 20th century, producing binary animation. Precisely because of their popularity, my study is limited to these companies yet to focus mainly on the later, less explored half of the 20th century, and the beginning of the 21st, i.e., on multidimensional animation. My research addresses

popular films and series that appear on cartoon network channels and as Saturday morning cartoons, as well as contemporary feature films. In this study, both short films and feature films are addressed in order to understand popular animation as a film form and not only as a cultural and industrial product. The following are examples of the primary sources of my study:

- DreamWorks – *Shrek 2* (2004), *Sinbad: The Legend of the Seven Seas* (2003), *Spirit - Stallion of the Cimarron* (2002), *Shrek* (2001), *The Road to El Dorado* (2000).
- 20th Century Fox – *The Simpsons* (1989-2005), *Ice Age* (2002), *Futurama* (1999).
- Disney / Pixar – *The Incredibles* (2005), *Finding Nemo* (2003), *Monsters Inc.* (2001).
- Warner Bros. – *Animatrix* (2003), *Animaniacs* (1993-1998), *Batman: The Animated Series* (1992-1995).

Although in this study popular animation is divided into two categories following the sociological and cultural shift mentioned above, there is no clear division as such yet due to the natural process of change within which the old is intermixed with the new. Nevertheless, in order to achieve a clearer understanding of my research I define binary popular animation (animation made around 1920-1988) and multidimensional popular animation (made around 1988-2005) as set out in Table 1.1:

Table 1.1 Identification of popular animational development (1.2.1a)

| | Binary popular animation (~1920-1988) | Multidimensional popular animation (~1988-2005) | My practice as reflexive animation |
|---|--|---|--|
| Ideology within films | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of stereotypes towards perfectionised American way of life and behaviour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of cultural diversity, while allowing doubt and mistake to be a relevant part of experience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of open-mindedness and flexibility towards any difference - Emphasis on self-exploration |
| Narrative structure (representation) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clearly defined binary moral values - Happy endings and feeling of safety - Linear structure that leads to a clear final answer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fluid and changeable values - Feeling of uncertainty and risk - Circular structure that leads to re-examination of the process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Value is seen as a subjective experience - Positive approach towards any endings, changeability and flexibility are emphasised - Circular structure |
| Formal characteristics (appearances) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manual production that is technologically edited - Emphasis on simplicity, visual gags, basic colours, graphic style, thick contour line and flatness - Emphasis on microscopic enlargement of details that appears surreal and unfamiliar to the unprofessional eye | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Production is a mix of computer-generated technology with manual technique - Emphasis on complex, critical relationships within the narratives, diverse textures and colours create the outline - Emphasis on naturalistic perception, with slight emphasis on the unfamiliar fields of expanded naturalistic abilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Computer production with emphasis on manual qualities of line and movement - Emphasis on subtlety, nuances and greater sophistication in form, line, colour and movement - Emphasis on naturalistic perception that is shaped by emotional personal content, while maintaining critical self-observation |
| Animator's position | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasis on exploration of technical abilities of the medium of animation - Emphasis on animator's abilities and individuality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasis on effortless live-like appearance as if there were no animator behind the image - Emphasis on diversity in content rather than in appearance, as films are made on similar software | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasis on exploration of personal abilities, tools of expression and clear communication within the confines of technology - Emphasis on depth of narrative and a personal statement |

Undermining “safe” status of popular animation as a family entertainment

My work observes the ideological discourses in popular two-dimensional animation by undermining the binary status of popular animation as “safe family entertainment” that still lingers as a myth around popular animation as a medium. What used to be defined by American censorship (Cohen, 1997: 11) as “safe” family entertainment is an entertainment that is bent to the norms of what was then socially defined as “right” and “appropriate”. “Safe” films such as Disney’s *House of Mouse* series (Jan. 2001-Nov. 2003), which later changed its name to *ABC Kids*, had no violence or swear words. Yet they gently introduced the public to stereotypic thinking in which the right guys were always Americans by definition of language and appearance as opposed to the foreign looking “baddies”. The notion of safe / unsafe is an ideology itself, which is socially constructed and changes over time. Sweet colourful appearances and mythic characteristics often disguised ideological discourses. This research identifies the meanings of these myths within popular animation, which on the one hand suggest a clear ideological commercial perspective, while on the other hand attempt to shift the viewer’s attention away from social, cultural and political meanings by increasingly fascinating appearances in popular animation films.

Foundations of critical language of the thesis

My research explores historical, philosophical and theoretical perspectives of popular animation while using a critical language that has been developed, based on writers such as Foucault, Ritzer, Virilio, Debord, Baudrillard and Benjamin. This critical language is drawn from late 20th century cultural studies, sociology and film studies of authors that are of great importance which, however, have not yet been applied to the critique of popular animation. Alongside this critical language, I have elaborated another style of writing with which the expressiveness of the animator and the animational experience can be depicted. That language is more personal, almost poetic in its fluency since, for example, to explain a certain colour as blue does not convey the expressive qualities of shape, hue or feeling that this colour conveys. Through that personal, animative poetic style I inquire into the way an

animator expresses him/herself emotionally, both through the mind and the physical senses.

Adaptation of ‘representation’ as a term in popular animation

Exploring the popular animational process and product in terms of expression leads one to understand representation in popular animation films. However, I suggest a redefinition of the notion of representation in popular animation. Instead of seeing an animated image simply as a representation, I divide observing an animated image into two aspects of expression, i.e., of depiction / appearance and representation. Although at first the two might seem similar, they are in fact quite distinct qualities. For example, the image of a crown in popular animation most probably would be recognised as an idea of a crown in the first instance. Yet in different films the crown will appear differently and have different meanings in relation to context. Its size and colour, and the thickness of the contour line may change. Arguably, these qualities are “external”, depictive qualities of the appearance of the crown. However, there is also another aspect to that image, its “internal” aspect, which is its representation. Thus, for instance, in DreamWorks’s *The Road to El Dorado* (2000) the characters Miguel and Tulio arrive at a foreign Lost City of Gold, where on the one hand they are helping the kingdom by getting rid of the blood-thirsty priest, yet, on the other hand, they undermine the role of the local king by establishing their own authority as gods or rulers from the outside world. In another film, as for example seen in *The Truth* (Natalie Dekel, 2004), the King remains a powerful figure even when he is old, vulnerable and decides to pass on his duties to his son. Thus one can conclude that what seems to appear is not necessarily what it is or what it communicates or represents from within. In other words, the sign “crown” can change its meaning depending on the context in which it is used. Although the core idea of what that sign signifies remains the same (crown – object), “in use” that core idea changes its appearance (yellow crown) and what it represents (king, foreign ruler, puppet) since each time the sign is used, it is used in a different context. Understanding the differences in meaning in those terms will

enable us to observe and understand other aspects of that sign and the meanings that it communicates; see Figure 1.1 for a graphic clarification of these issues.

Although the way I define these terms may remind one of semiotics in terms of denotation and connotation, that is not how they are used here. Semiotics analyses events in terms of symbolism or signs as borrowed from various linguistic terms that could give a new perspective on cultural phenomena. Similarly, this research explores forms of appearance for their meanings, by searching for the inner essence of events. However, I am interested in what these external signs, these appearances, stand for, rather than categorising events into signs. I follow my own ideas and development rather than structuring my work around previously categorised notions and the language of semiotics, which seems to me rather rigid and formulaic. My main aim is to observe the meanings underlying appearances in popular animation. I do not want to judge what I see but rather to observe and guide viewers to their own opinion. I am aware of a certain similarity of my work to that of semiotics, in terms of the importance of bringing into the open aspects of meanings that are ignored by orthodox disciplines. However, I choose to create my own framework and language of research. Furthermore, popular animation as a medium has come from the mixture of theatre, painting, cinema and comic. These aspects of animation are explored through their own guidelines, such as line, acting, timing, movement, colour and sound and therefore ask the critic to abandon the language of semiology.

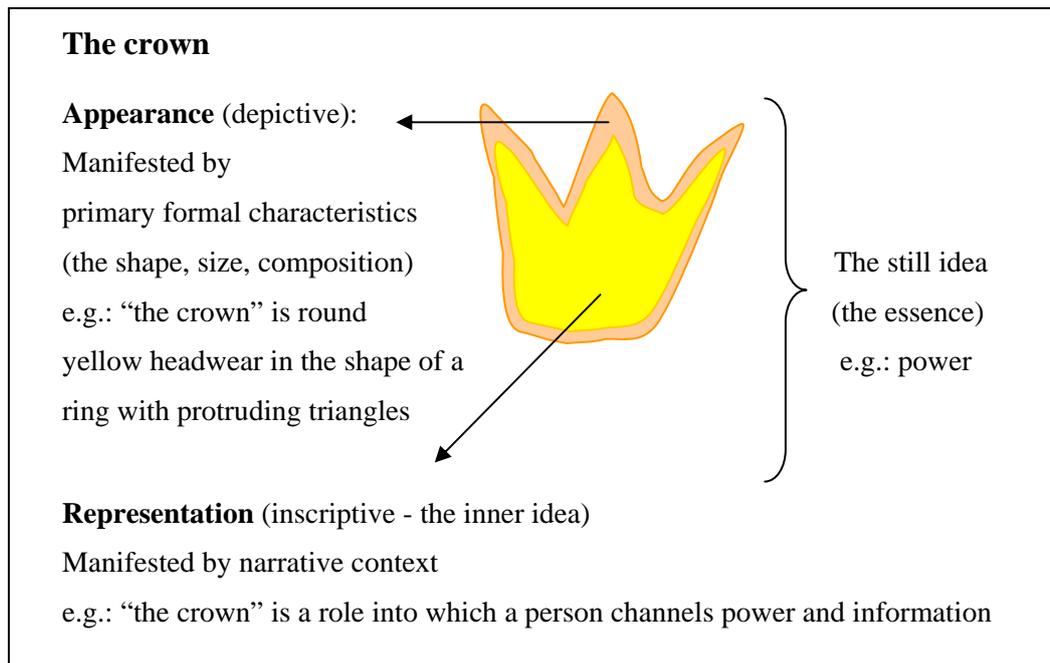


Figure 1.1 Differences between appearance and representation (1.2.1b)

What is seen in the film is its *appearance*, but how it is formalised, what determines its meanings is what it *represents* from within. This primary conclusion requires an investigation into the meanings behind the appearances in animation and the representations of these appearances. Understanding how formal depictive aspects of animation are produced within specific historical, social and cultural contexts reveals the ideological discourses that shape the production of different animation films and gives meaning to those depictive aspects.

I understand that all these divisions are artificial and together inseparably compose the whole animation image and its meaning, but in order to have tools to understand the meaning communicated through animation, I shall use these definitions for the purpose of this study.

Two- dimensional animation as research limitation

I have chosen to limit my study to two-dimensional popular animation. Paul Wells (2000: 35) explains that this form of animation is mostly associated with a

certain level of narrative, which involves gags, particular cultural codes, continuity, an event and its resolution and a comic style. He argues that two-dimensional popular animation remains the most convenient technique for mass production because it is stylised and structured in a way that makes it easy to reproduce. For this reason it is the most commonly seen form of animation, and yet it is still largely unexplored in academic work.

Throughout this study I shall work with any type of two-dimensional animation film as long as it meets the definition of two-dimensional popular animation. I would like to define the scope of two-dimensional animation, as sometimes throughout my research it may appear that I work with films that cannot be compared. To clarify my definition of two-dimensionality I want to discuss, briefly, a few types of dimension within the medium of animation. The three-dimensional type is animation made with puppets and/or objects as mentioned in Wells (2000:80, 104, 111), Bendazzi (1994:167-177, 183) and Pilling (1997:xii). The two-dimensional type is any animation whose image was drawn or pixilated on a flat two-dimensional space, regardless whether paper or screen. Even if the image appears three-dimensional on the computer screen, it is still made and viewed in terms of a linear perspective (Piper, 2001: 104). Often animation done on a two-dimensional computer screen is perceived as three-dimensional because Western audiences are educated in Western codes of perspective. Wells (1997b: 92) explains that the whole definition of “three-dimensional” graphics or imagery is mistaken.

What it really means is that by ‘3-dimensional graphics’ people actually mean ‘perspective graphics’. They present an image, which has got the correct vanishing points, and correct scaling for a three-dimensional image but basically it is on a two-dimensional screen. The information in the computer software packages is two-dimensional.

The image has the same centre of perspective as it does on screen. It is impossible to go around the image or to see how it covers another object when it moves aside. Therefore, whether it is drawn by hand or computer-generated, it is part of a two-dimensional type of creation. This then is why throughout this study there are cases where seemingly unrelated animation sequences are compared, for example, between the animation film *Final fantasy: The Spirits Within* (USA/Japan), and *The*

Truth (Natalie Dekel, 2004). There is no need to judge such a comparison as invalid since each animation film has unique, individual qualities, which it expresses in a certain fashion of frame-by-frame technique and laws of linear, two-dimensional perspective that are shared by all popular animation films. Thus even animated sequences combined within live-action films are still part of a creative expression in animation that can be analysed and observed just as well as individual, independently broadcast animation films.

Animator's experience as part of the research

Throughout the investigation into narrative and representation behind popular animation imagery, my attention is focused on two aspects of the production of animation. One is the actual product that is being animated, which is the film. Another is the animator who, in the process of filmmaking, gives life to a film by embodying his/her essence and beliefs in film's imagery. As many studies have been carried out into viewers' perceptions and feelings while watching a film, such as those of Zakia (2002) and Shonfield (2000), (while none have focused on the animator's feelings and experiences as a filmmaker), I will concentrate on researching animation from the point of view of a practitioner. I will not be conducting a survey of viewers but rather investigate myself as an animator who is her own audience, recording my own results and the choices I make. In examining how sensory and emotional representations are expressed through formal and expressive characteristics, salient aspects of emotion and intuition within the animation film are analysed as both process and product.

Parallel aspects of analysis

Throughout my study formal, expressive and cinematic characteristics of popular animation production are analysed. Despite that initially these may appear to be the same, each part of the study will observe and explore these characteristics from different perspectives. For example, in Part One of my thesis aspects of narrative, style and editing are discussed in relation to their position within the ideological

discourses that shape animational narrative and representation, whereas in Part Two they are analysed as technical and individual binding units of popular animation as a cinematic form.

1.2.2 Synopsis

To answer the core research question concerning the development of popular animation beyond the restrictions of its former visual and narrative languages while embracing more complex and critical thinking, I have divided the thesis into two parts. Each part analyses a different theme but one that is an essential component of the main question, while the first and last chapters of the thesis respectively provide the general framework for the whole research process.

Although there are many ways to observe animation, I have chosen to observe both the external appearances of animation and the meanings these appearances represent. Arguably, close examination suggests that the characteristics of these appearances are not only a result of a commercialised global society, but also a reflection and criticism of it. I would further argue that popular animation not only reflects social and cultural frameworks but also explores the way we perceive our environment. Popular animation both examines the limits and the possibilities of the physical world we inhabit on a level of movement, shape and colour, and depicts social and cultural events. However, it expresses its investigation of the physical world in terms of squashing and stretching movement and making such movement fluid. It does not subvert the physical world but rather exaggerates and experiments with it. Since the audience is not used to seeing events in such detailed and exaggerated yet simplistic ways, it seems absurd and funny. Here is where my research comes in to explore the meanings behind these appearances, i.e., the representations of the world, of events, of characters, etc.

Part One examines the ideological discourses that are embedded in popular animational narratives. Chapters 2-5 examine how popular multidimensional animation still bears within its narratives trails of myths that are suggestive of commercial American imperialistic ideology. Analysing how these myths are communicated in the animated image brought me to explore both the tools of

appearances and the tools of representation within these images. I undermine the role of these myths by observing how these myths are visually, psychologically and commercially produced in popular animation. Technical reproduction and manipulation of movement and imagery shape these popular animated mythic appearances and prepare them to be sold as a global image to a wide audience. Although popular multidimensional animation is led by the West, bearing a strong imprint of American political and economic power, in terms of its global influence, it does not just spread the dominance of the West over the rest of the world but as Giddens (2000: 4) notes 'it affects the US as it does the other countries'. The same myths have become fictional shells still bearing "old previous names", such as family and relationships, for example, but clearly also have new contents and levels of consciousness that are not predicted.

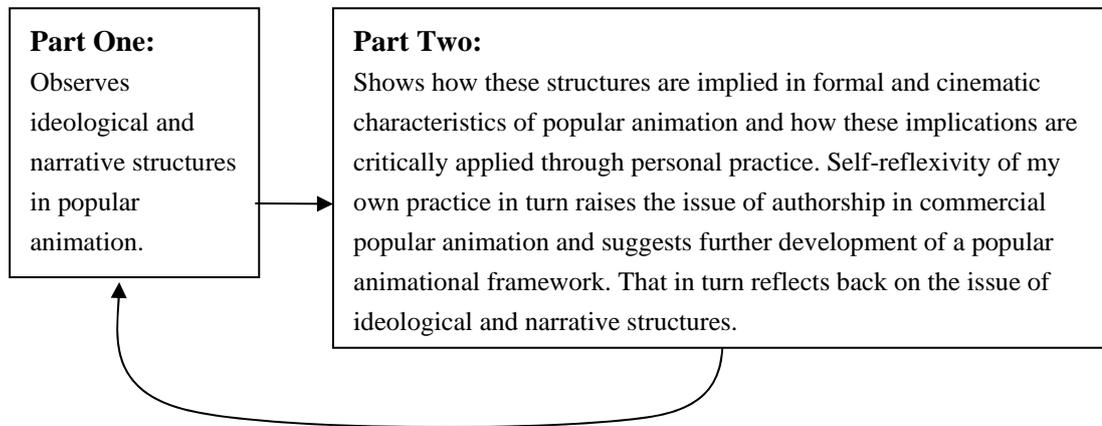
Part Two of the thesis investigates the meanings behind the formal, expressive and cinematic characteristics of popular animation through the analysis of personal practice and its reflections on the problematics raised in the critical overview. This analysis in turn situates popular animation as a cinematically critical film form. Chapters 6-10 observe the process of animation filmmaking, which involves complex, multidimensional, critical thinking. These chapters analyse every step of an animator's practice from the perspective of a critical, self-reflexive observer. This, in turn, portrays my practice as a type of multidimensional popular animation, in which uncertainty and experimental openness are placed in a commercial framework of production. Such self-reflexive analysis of practice reveals how an animator works with visual perception and understanding of an animated image as well as critically plans and executes every detail in a film. This has led me to acknowledge the existence of several levels of critical discussion within which I have created the film, namely, physical, emotional and intellectual levels. Such an analysis portrays the experiential knowledge of the filmmaking process through an open-ended practical exploration, which becomes a developing process of self-awareness and understanding.

Self-reflexive criticism of practice does not provide one with hard and fast rules for making an animation film, but with critical observations of the nature of the

animator's creative process within the confines of a commercial framework of popular animation. Part Two of the research therefore offers guidelines about how to situate and analyse popular animation within cinematic theory and studies in order to evaluate it as a film form in its own right. These guidelines are based on Bordwell and Thompson's (2001) overview of filmic structure and the art of filmmaking as well as on critical and cultural theory of films. However, I do not follow the guidelines as set down by major cinematic theorists such as Andre Bazin, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Sergei Eisenstein and Christian Metz simply because despite popular animation being part of a cinematic framework, it demands a special adaptation of the guidelines proposed by those writers to its unique modes of production. For this reason this study concentrates on the analysis of a film's structure by relating it to its component parts as seen throughout the analysis of personal practice. An understanding of those units reveals popular animation as an artistic and not only an industrial medium as we shall see in more detail in Part Two.

In order to situate my practice in a wider context, I use Paul Wells's method of comparison, as suggested in his book *Understanding Animation* (2000). Hence, I compare my practice of a self-reflexive approach with the critical multidimensional approach of contemporary animation and with binary popular animation. To do so I use the aspects that have been found problematic or significant throughout the theoretical overview as criteria for comparison as we can see in Part One, chapters 2-5. However, as opposed to Wells, who analyses mainly binary animation forms, I do not see any extremes or tension between experimental and commercial animations. The analysis of the multidimensional approach has led me to believe that one type of animation completes the other and both develop the medium and its possibilities.

The following summarises the development of the research:



By opening the narrative scope of popular animation to more globally sensitive issues as well as taking an individual, self-reflexive approach to it, my research opens a doorway of possibilities for developing the medium of popular animation beyond its former restrictions. This extension of the medium within its narrative, technological and formal aspects could push it to evolve into a new form that incorporates complex and subtle qualities that will raise it on both industrial and academic levels.

1.2.3 Commercial limitations of popular two-dimensional animation

As with live-action film, animation shows the same technical structure of a sequence of 25 images per second captured on film. As a popular medium at the beginning of the 20th century, the two-dimensional binary style of animation was shaped by its commercial limitations. As a result, it was characterised by flatness, caricature-like directness and boldness as well as by limited movement, hard-cut editing and bright basic colours in a graphic, contoured style. Animation has always been wedded to technology, yet its commercialism and industrial, Fordist style of mass production for the sake of profits in the later years of the 20th century have led to an exaggeration of the importance of the external appearance and physical forces involved in the movements of characters and shapes in animation films (Bendazzi, 1994: xxii). For example, Mitchell (2002) argues that Disney company has produced

a (partial) CGI feature *Dinosaur* (2000), while using live action for scenery, with backgrounds shot all around the world. The film made \$350 million at the box-office, while it cost \$200 million to make and at one time nearly 900 people were working on it. Its poor financial performance caused Disney to close the CGI unit it had created to produce the film, though it has since re-opened it on a much smaller scale. The accepted explanation for the failure of *Dinosaur* (2000) is the familiar one - a poor plot - which recycles ideas from *The Lion King* (1994) and *Tarzan* (1999). Other animation companies such as Hanna-Barbera and Warner Bros. have also used recycled ideas, forms and shapes as well as the introduction of simple shapes and movement of characters that made it easier and faster to draw, and produced a uniform style in which movement does not have to be properly or fully drawn. Hence, “limited” commercial animation has been structured as an industrial solution.

1.3 Theoretical position

To accomplish the research objective, theoretical and practical contexts need to be established in relation to the literature on popular animation as well as to its industrial field of practice. Only then can a critical, self-reflexive system of analysis be designed, because it is the contextual circumstances that determine the structure of the popular animation industry and its interaction with other artistic and academic fields.

1.3.1 Academic research context

Being mainly a popular commercially and industrially produced film form, two-dimensional animation has been very limited as a field for academic inquiry and critical thinking. Most of the literature on popular animation is concerned with its early stages, mainly with the big companies that led the market and a few leading animators such as Chuck Jones and Walt Disney, which has resulted in a number of biographies. Literature has structured a technical and historical framework for the discussion of popular animation in terms of (i) progress (e.g., Bendazzi, 1994; Culhane, 1998); (ii) of its commercial and industrial aspects (e.g., Hollinshead,

1998; Wasko, 2001); or (iii) of the purely mechanical aspects of how to draw an animation film (e.g., Simon, 2003; Taylor, 1999; Williams, 2001). However, there has been little investigation into the images, narratives and cinematic forms of animation, which are clearly inspired by the rhetoric and fetishism of its own technology. Arguably, almost none relates to the actual meanings of the representations produced within that type of animation.

There have been a few analyses of the ideology of specific areas of popular animation, such as Disney's films (Dorfman & Mattelart, 1984) or the television series *Teenage Mutants Ninja Turtles* (Hillel, 1991). Dorfman and Mattelart undermine the ideas of naivety and family entertainment that surround the Disney corporate identity by presenting Disney as a symbol of capitalism that brainwashes the audience. A related standpoint is taken by Hillel's article, analysing the *Teenage Mutants Ninja Turtles* series (Warner Bros., 1987-1995). Hillel sees a very strong political-military influence on different types of animation hero-mutants-films. These authors critically question ideology and representation in popular animation produced from the early years of the 20th century up to the late 1980s. Other authors, like Pilling (1997), Hollinshead (1998), Wasko (2001) and Leslie (2002), have also spoken about ideology in popular animation films, mostly with respect to The Walt Disney Company (forthwith referred to as Disney/Disney studios) at the beginning of the 20th century. Leslie (2002), for example, raises important questions of realism, pretended utopias, mass production, violence and the cultural position of popular animation, thus helping to fill in and understand the historical background against which the contemporary position of animation has been developed. In this respect she offers a critical interpretation of the subject. Others, like Wells (2000), reclaim animation film as an important art form in its own right and provide points of access for the study of the animation art medium. Wells comes from media studies but recognises the issues raised by cultural studies within the animation context such as the issues of gender roles and power relations between the characters. He provides lines of inquiry into animation as a cinematic form, mainly as an art form; he acknowledges the place of animation in cinema history and critically evaluates the achievements of the popular animation industry while attempting to raise the profile of animation by stressing its artistic qualities. Wells

addresses the issue of text in animation, something that in his opinion is underestimated by the audience. Wells relates to the animated form through the general themes that are raised in its text, such as sexuality, nostalgia, gender and humour. Wells analyses animative narrative devices, rather than exploring the meaning of a technically more intuitive process of filmmaking. His study is mindful of the history of the animation industry and animation films, mainly artistic-experimental films (mostly from the first half of the 20th century) and Disney films created before 1993.

A significant part of the academic literature on animation involves historical reviews, for example, by Bendazzi (1994) and Furniss (1999). In contrast to Bendazzi, who produced a concise history of the animation industry up to the early 1990s, Furniss investigates animation from a cinematic point of view. He examines artistic details such as line, colour and shape, as well as editing techniques, angles, format and movement. Furniss examines the cinematic form of animation as an external system that shapes the mood of an audience. My research uses Furniss's examination as a foundation, which gives rise to a search for the meaning of line and colour as independent elements of an animation film. For example, Furniss (1999: 75) mentions that a line in animation symbolizes the physical power of a character, whereas I extend the notion of line beyond its significance as a "line" by arguing that line has a significant role in creating a notion of space in an animation film. A graphic line can be defragmented and softly disappear only to re-appear and form a new shape with the same definite graphic outline. In other words, line acts as a mediator connecting dimensions and shapes. This is an example of how important is the analysis of representation and appearance in popular animation. Even a purely technical term, such as "line" or "shape", can be seen differently in terms of its role in the animation film.

Although some authors have critically analysed popular animation elements such as line and shape, in the main critical observations of popular animation practice are made from the position of the "external" critical thinker without the thinker being actually aware of and intimately familiar with aspects of the "internal" practitioner's animation practice. Arguably, lack of experience of popular animation practice

suggests that there will likely be shortcomings in the critical analysis of that mode of production and the meanings behind its imagery. Furthermore, such analyses of popular animation provide viewers with certain fixed opinions and attitudes towards a popular medium rather than enabling them to read animation films and their imagery independently.

My research attempts to move the critical discussion of animation film from its current academic treatment to a level that correlates the theoretical and the practical approaches in popular animational theory. The research has its foundation in the above academic positions while parting with mainstream ones in a few important respects. Firstly, the research illustrates the position of popular animation as a broad category of popular culture as seen in Part One, while recognising its unique forms of production and representation as seen in Part Two. Secondly, the research investigates the meanings of what is represented in popular animation and the appearances these representations take by combining the insider's point of view (i.e., the practitioner's) with that of the critical analyst. This can be clearly seen in the analysis of my personal practice as well as in my critical investigation of academic critiques, an approach that is different from mainstream analysis. Although the mainstream literature comprises biographies of popular animators which discuss their practice, for example, those by Canemaker (1996), Culhane (1998) and Lenburg (1993), they do not seem to observe the process of production but rather the person/s who undertook that process. Nevertheless, the biographies of the early animators in America are important since they are linked directly to the development of the animation industry. As early animators moved freely between various studios, which were riddled with rivalry and competition, the biographies reveal relationships between animation studios and allow an understanding of both the institutional aspects of animation and the animators' personal points of view.

Combining the practitioner's view with that of the critic enables a wider observation of the medium of popular animation as well as an independent reading of its imagery and form as film. Rather than reading and re-reading the meanings of the popular animation industry in the first half of the 20th century, as does mainstream academic literature, my research observes contemporary popular

animation and how it evolves within its own framework, while embracing new technologies and more critical and subtle ways of thinking about the language of animation in terms of its formal and expressive characteristics. To do so my research develops links between popular animation and modernist critiques. Esther Leslie (2002) was among the first to create similar links, and her research lays the foundation for researching the key questions in my own study. Similarly to Leslie, I have adapted research from philosophical, social, cultural and film studies into my research. Making use of such a broadly-based analysis extends the borders of my critique, raising the level of that critique to the level of academic research in popular animation. Leslie's (2002) work is indeed significant for the development of critical theory in popular animation field. However, after so many years of underestimation, the development of a mature language for a critique of animation will take some time to change the aura surrounding the animation industry. Each new study is thus expected to add to the development of a critical stance and to a shift in the attitudes towards popular animation.

In order to understand how popular animation develops within its own framework, it is necessary to understand the cultural context of the society that enabled the production of animation films. My research thus will look afresh at the links between the scholars writing in the fields of social science and film studies. I have linked Foucault's (1980) theory of the use of power to Ritzer's (2000) notion of the loss of authorship in a commercial society, in order to analyse the direction of commodities in the animation industry and to inquire into the presence of ideological and commercial power within its films. In addition, I have established a connection with new interpretations of the writings of Barlow (1990) and Currie (1997) on the brain's ability to analyse an image, in order to examine the impact of animated images. To shape my argument about the consequences of those influences, I have examined Bauman (1995), Harvey (1989) and Hall (1997) for the implications of visual culture on human perception. However, the main point of discussion in my research is not cultural and cinematic theories but understanding popular animation as artistic and cinematic form. Furthermore, using these theories makes for a more intellectual analysis of the position of popular animation, given that it was treated for so long as industrially produced commercial entertainment aimed at a young

audience. Consequently, to contextualize the growing importance of technological developments in popular animation, I have applied Virilio's (1994) suggestions of "technological impact" and Debord's (1992) theory of "addictiveness to technological trends". Debord's critique of contemporary society, with its emphasis on representation, connects my research to consumerism in the animation industry, while Virilio's analysis of image and his consciousness of speed and technology help to re-examine the notion of globality of the perception and broadcasting of animation imagery. These arguments provide lines of inquiry into technical, textual and visual aspects of popular animation, to examine the manipulation of natural sight and visual perception in popular animation, the meanings that these manipulations create and the psychological affect of the visual effects on the viewer.

1.3.2 Professional research context

Narratives and representation in popular animation film can be understood in the context of the whole scope of post-modern culture. Similarly to the recognition that simple round forms were developed for animated characters in order to make the preparation process of animation faster (Thomas, 1991), so speed and fragmentation in popular animation are the result of the demands of commercial broadcasting. The popular animation industry, therefore, had to choose between being technologically advanced in its details and textures or place the emphasis on the quality of narrative and representation. Arguably, most studios, including Disney, went for the first choice since that charmed them and significantly eased the requirements of animation production. Popular animation therefore achieved its highly detailed and naturalistic appearance with the help of advanced technology. Yet, the naturalistic appearance of characters, based on research by animators into their formal characteristics, continues to be based on a limited, stylised and industrialised presentation of characters. For example, in 20th Century Fox's *Ice Age* (2002), despite hyperrealistic appearances the characters are not structured enough in terms of movements and appearance, as explained in more detail in chapters 4 and 5, which do not always match the computer-generated backgrounds and their roles

within the narrative. That is so despite the fact that the film takes a strong position regarding the morals and the social conventions within the film's narrative.

Arguably, in the process of its development provided by the new technological opportunities, popular animation has become more concerned with social reflection and criticism than with individual creative expression as, for example, in Hanna-Barbera's *Powerpuff Girls* (1998-2004) TV series. In those films, strong ideological positions are held that involve even political views. Yet the characters move in a very stylized manner, limited by a commercial form of less than 12 frames per second, rather than having full, researched movement as was the case in classical animation, for example, in Disney movies. Nevertheless, animation as a non-industrial creative individual art form does exist, but is marginal compared with the medium using the animation techniques that are familiar to a general audience. Yet, it is in the marginal animation forms that a more individual and artistic expression is openly found. Such animation is less visually stylized to meet commercial demands and quick observation, and clearly is not industrial. Its individual artistic style is not limited by commercial boundaries and standards. Popular animation by contrast, Wells (2000) argues, is banal but more successful and widely distributed. Observing the differences between the two main types of animation as Wells presents them leads me to believe that it is precisely because of animation's technicality and materiality that the medium presents the audience with particular messages as seen in popular animation. My belief that materiality significantly affects the messages in the representational aspects of popular animation indicates the urgency for its analysis. Therefore it is important to understand how exactly the animator produces a film and its imagery.

Even though popular animation is a cinematic form based on the same cinematic foundation as live-action films, such as narrative sequence and editing process, the rules according to which these basics are applied are different. For example, live-action films might include angles, colours, lines or shadows that the director did not intend to put in, but the camera "happened to catch" as opposed to the thorough control over each and every element of the animation film exercised by its animator. Although cinema studies and theories can be used as a framework to drive this

unique adaptation of the cinematic analysis of animation as a film form, it is not possible to use them in their direct form. Hence, I refer to famous cinematic theorists such as Andre Bazin, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Sergei Eisenstein and Christian Metz only to structure the framework of this cinematic analysis. While I base the main tools of my analysis on their ideas of time, editing, space, psychology of image, artist and character, I adjust them to the modes of production and materiality of popular animation.

My understanding of the French film theorist Christian Metz is largely based on Penley's (2004) critical analysis of his work, which has opened a new field of inquiry into cinema semiotics. Metz used semiology as a tool for understanding the relationship between ideology and aesthetic expression. As a semiotic study analyses without separating the specialized codes of a particular medium from its cultural codes, which are inscribed in and by it, it is an effective tool for examining ideology and its interaction with other codes in a film's text.

According to Penley (2004), Metz developed a new approach to thinking about films in terms of a culturally and ideologically determined heterogeneity of codes, rather than using a theoretical film model based on verbal language. He argues that an image, unlike a word, cannot be reduced to smaller units and analysed by rigid analogies with language. An image, he argues, is not an indication of the thing as in the case of words, but the actual "pseudo-presence of the thing". Metz does not give attention to the fact that the mechanical nature of basic filmic production integrates into the final product filmic units such as editing, which are governed mainly by cultural paradigms.

Penley (2004) argues that Metz's notion of the image as mimetic is the opposite of that held by Umberto Eco, the Italian semiologist whom Metz cited as responsible for many of his later changes. Eco posited the idea that ideology cannot be separated from the cinematic codes which mediate, transform and deform it. Eco argued that there are so many transformations involved in getting from the object to the representation of the object that the image has none of the properties of the object represented, but that, at most, the image reproduces some of the conditions of perception. Eco analysed the perceptual codes of an image, which help us

understand it, such as codes of recognition and transmission, and rhetorical, stylistic and unconscious codes. Metz, on the other hand, considered cinematic images too “natural” to be subjected to analysis and decided that the essence of cinema and the units most appropriate to study are the large units of its narrative (Penley, 2004). Metz’s thinking of a filmic image as “natural” evokes several problems in its claim that the image is unconstructed by any force / determination – that it is just “there”. The idea of film image as natural contradicts its own structure as a man-made narrative product. Historically, the commercial and industrial circumstances of movie making have brought forth the narrative development of cinema. Yet even the psychological linking of edited film segments was regarded by Metz as “natural”. He believed that the spectator interpolates spontaneously the visual material that the film presents. Metz, however, did not account for the fact that we learn to read a series of images and their connections in a culturally and ideologically determined manner. Penley (2004) sees Metz’s idea of cinesemiotics as deeply embedded in and informed by the dominant bourgeois ideology. Metz would rather dismiss or completely ignore certain areas of filmmaking practice that do not fall under his definition for fictional narrative (e.g., avant-garde and experimental film). Unfortunately, this dismissal includes some of the very films which are now posing the most interesting questions about cinematic discourse, among them popular animation.

As opposed to Metz, Eisenstein experimented with rapid editing / montage, deep focus photography and the long take, which shaped and manipulated narrative and representation in films. His direction of the films *Battleship Potemkin* and *Oktober* greatly influenced early documentary directors owing to his innovative use of montage. He believed that film editing does not only link scenes together in a movie, but also manipulates the audience’s emotions. In effect, his films were aimed at transcending the level of mere presentation of reality and at explaining conflict. Thus Eisenstein brought to filmmaking a broad awareness of the power of motion pictures as a propaganda tool. Researching this subject, he developed what he called “intellectual montage / editing“, in which a new idea is created that originally is not found in any of the individual shots.

Intellectual montage offers discontinuity in graphic qualities and violates a basic filmmaking “line” rule, which has its origins in human psychology, that states that two characters in the same scene should always have the same left / right relationship to each other throughout the film. Eisenstein argued that “montage is a conflict” where new ideas emerge from the collision of images. He used intellectual montage in his experimental films (such as *Oktober*) to portray the political situation surrounding the Russian Revolution. He believed that intellectual montage expresses a basic thought process as it forms thoughts in the minds of the viewer, and is therefore a powerful tool propaganda. Eisenstein’s use of intellectual montage in his films, such as in *Strike*, had him include a sequence with cross-cut editing between the slaughter of a bull and the slaughter of people. We shall shortly see how this may be applied in popular animation.

In the early 50s of the 20th century, Andre Bazin, a French film theorist, introduced the idea of seeing cinematic products as worthy of critical academic analysis. Such idea was gradually unfolded into what later was called ‘film studies’, while two of his translated collections of criticism are mainstays of film courses. He was supportive of Eisenstein’s ideas about the impact of film editing on viewers’ perceptions and emotions. Bazin encouraged constructive film criticism and initiated cinema magazines, which re-invented the basic tenets of film theory (auteur, mise-en-scène...). Although Andre Bazin and his followers recognized that moviemaking was an industrial process, they proposed an ideal to strive for while using the commercial apparatus the way a writer uses a pen. This theory espouses the proposition that all directors have such a distinctive style that it is embedded in their films. You cannot see a film by a given director without recognizing his or her influence. Auteurist critics such as Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol and Rohmer wrote mainly about directors, although they also produced some shrewd appreciation of actors. Later writers of the same school emphasized the contributions of star personalities. This approach to film theory and production has led to the development of Nouvelle Vogue or New Wave of French cinema, in which the films falling into that category were largely directed by former-writers of the film critiques that followed Andre Bazin.

A careful observation of film theory reveals interesting parallels to popular animation. Popular animation is a form of cinematic production and works according to basic cinematic notions of narrative and ideology, editing and sound, an analysis of *mise-en-scène* and issue of realism. However, while the main ideas that work for live-action cinema work also for popular animation, specific theories as influenced by Metz, Eisenstein and Bazin need to be adjusted to animation's unique technical abilities. Unlike Metz, I see an animated image as a formal and ideological structure that can be reduced to smaller basic units and analysed. In my analysis of popular animation as a cinematic form I relate to the ideology behind the narratives, the analysis of *mise-en-scène* and the notion of editing as well as the meaning of the image. My main argument coincides with Eco's position of seeing an image as carrying certain ideological positions rather than Metz's neutral "natural" image production. Yet, as opposed to live-action films in which the photographic image creates an indication of a thing in reality, a popular animated image portrays an object as a symbol that carries additional meanings in its form of appearance. For example, a chair in animation is more an icon represented by a chair than a photographic representation of an object that exists in reality. This demands a different form of analysis from the one used in live-action films. Moreover, as animated icons are carefully chosen and executed in animation films, their visual representation allows ideology to be thought of as something existing throughout every particle of the film, including its formal characteristics. Those ideological imprints within the film become even more significant when the film is edited. This is why Eisenstein's theory concerning the importance of editing is of great significance in the critical analysis of popular animation. However, as opposed to Eisenstein's view of editing as a tool for creating ideological discourses, I investigate editing as a process in which ideology is already embedded. I do not create ideology but aim to observe and analyse it. As Eisenstein notes, film editing is more than merely a method used to link scenes together in a film, which is why I see great importance in the analysis of editing processes in popular animation, a recognition that is long overdue in the academic critical literature.

As Bazin argues, the cinematic image, including that of popular animation needs to be treated respectfully as it unveils the potential to depict reality. Even although

popular animation at first glance does not seem to portray actual reality or show a systematic connection with it, a close examination in this present study indicates how animation embeds reality in characteristics, movements and narratives. The fact that this is not obvious to the viewer makes it even more significant for its effects on the viewer's perception as commercial two-dimensional animation is widely distributed and popular. Bazin's idea of the auteur theory is also applicable in relation to popular animation films. Bazin argues that every filmmaker leaves his/her imprints in the work s/he has done even without being aware of it consciously. That is indeed what happens in animation films where animators are the storytellers behind the narratives and the actual filmmakers and directors. Accordingly, much of the literature such as Wasko (2001), Ward (2002), Thomas (1991) and Allan (1999) concentrates on popular animators such as Walt Disney and Chuck Jones. While producing my own animation film it became evident that the auteur theory is rooted deeply in the practice of popular animation, as even industrially produced commercial films carry a significant imprint of their creators by their very drawing style – which is practically an animator's signature – thus enabling the creative individual and the creative aspects of the animation film to be revealed through the commercial apparatus of its production.

Popular animation as a medium activates the object that is animated, the film and the animator who animates it. By emphasising the significance and the interdependence of both sides of the animation process, as seen throughout practical and critical theoretical research, the attention of one's observation and analysis shifts from final product to process. My research addresses this issue through a continuous dialogue between theory and personal practice. Reflection on animation practice in general through personal practice is an act of being conscious of the development of formal and expressive characteristics and the messages that are represented through these characteristics that take place within the creative process. The results of every animation film are therefore not seen as the end of the creative process, but as a path, an awareness that is achieved through and by the artist and in turn indicates the next stage of growth by both the artist and the product.

1.3.3 Practice-led research context

Popular animation forcefully keeps developing its contents and techniques, distributing its products globally. On the other hand, as a critical academic field of inquiry it is underestimated and neglected. Furniss (1999: 3) notes that,

While many colleges and universities have animation production courses, the study of the form's aesthetics, history and theory generally has been relegated to the status of an elective 'special course' offered only on an occasional basis or not at all. In some cases, when animation is discussed, it is subsumed under another subject matter, such as avant-garde film. The denigrated status of Animation Studies in the university is largely due to the belief held in many countries that animation is not a 'real' art form because it is too popular, too commercialized, or too closely associated with 'fandom' or youth audiences to be taken seriously by scholars.

Likewise Hill and Gibson (1998: 434) argue that

the multitude of styles and forms of animation brought about its position of theoretical and critical ignorance and neglect. Because of animation's broad use of techniques and styles as well as eclecticism of materials, the critical theory and analysis were pushed aside. Some of the authors even argue that animation is part of a graphic art rather than an independent subject of investigation.

Wells (2000: 7-8) continues the argument that animation as a medium of filmmaking practice is neglected and explains that,

the study of animation has had to surmount the incredulity of both students and academics who have not recognized the medium as an important and neglected aspect of filmmaking practice, despite its obvious popularity and endurance in the face of passing generic and aesthetic trends in other areas of cinema. Animation has been trivialized and ignored despite its radical tendencies and self-evident artistic achievements at the technical and aesthetic level. Ironically, the dominance of the cartoon (i.e. traditional cel animation in the style of Disney or Warner Bros., which is predicated on painting forms and figures) ...is taken for granted by its viewers. The cartoon seems part of an easily dismissed popular culture; animation as a term, at least carries with it an aspiration for recognition as art, and indeed, the proper evaluation of other animated forms. Importantly, though, historians and scholars have repositioned the cartoon as an art form (Adamson 1975...), and provided the platform for the recovery of ...animation, which ...deserve recognition and study nevertheless.

Pilling (1997) is therefore able to note that

over the past decade, animation seems to have emerged from its previously very marginal status, both in terms of a growing adult audience for the very heterogeneous range of films that come under the rubric “animation” and in terms of academic study.

This is where the significance of my research at this particular time in the popular animation industry lies. My research attempts to portray the ways by which popular animation can develop beyond the restrictions imposed by its former visual and narrative languages, which were driven by commercial post-modern social and cultural conditions as argued above. My research not only suggests that it is necessary to consider the research question as to how popular animation can be developed, theoretically, but also to learn to understand how individual practice can be inspired by the shift occurring in popular animation, which in turn affects the critical position that lies behind the theory of popular animation as a filmmaking medium.

Animation as a medium involves both preparatory theoretical and performing aspects. Both aspects need to be explored and explained in detail in order to reveal existing problematics and their solutions if one wants to critically observe popular animation as a whole. However, in order to explain in theoretical terms the phenomenon of change in the aspects of formal and expressive characteristics that occurs in animation, it makes sense and is indeed necessary to analyse it through actual animational practice. Similarly in music or in dancing – if one wants to explain something which is an integral part of the actual process of music or dancing, it makes sense to perform rather than to read theoretical assumptions about music or choreography. My practice is, therefore, an essential part of understanding the change that popular animation as a medium is undergoing, while the critical theoretical approach provides lines of inquiry into industrial, ideological and visual aspects of popular animation.

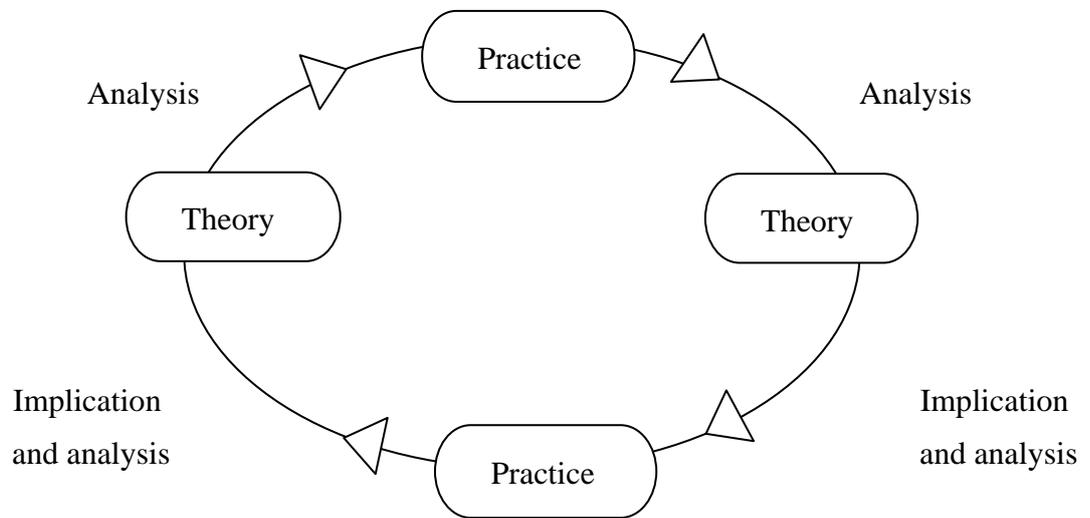


Figure 1.2 Methodological model of research development (1.3.3)

Engaging in my own practice while basing it on the theoretical analysis of the popular animation medium led me to develop a methodology that makes it possible to combine within it both the practitioner’s position and a critical theoretical position. As a consequence my practice involves both the concepts of subjectivity and spontaneity that are characteristic of individual practice and aspects of what might be considered a more social-scientific approach, critically observing every step of the practice process. Such a methodology accepts and critiques at the same time. The process of simultaneously destroying and preserving that which has gone before is directed towards a new synthesis, towards an open-ended multidimensional destination. This methodology identifies a cyclical pattern of activity, in which theory reflects on practice, which in turn affects the theory.

So how does practice affect and enrich theoretical observation? Initially every stage of my practice responded to the two sub-themes that are intended to answer the core research question. The first theme, which examines the ideological discourses in popular narratives and what is represented in them, was manifested in the film’s

planning and the adaptation of its narratives, symbols and appearances. The second theme, which investigates the meanings behind the formal, expressive and cinematic characteristics of popular animation, was manifested in my actual practice and its analysis, which in turn affected and enriched my theoretical discussion. This analysis not only structured my practice as a self-reflective critical style of filmmaking, but as a result also situated popular animation as a film form within a practical and theoretical context as well as my own practice within the theoretical framework of popular animation as a cinematic form. It seems therefore that practice is an essential and integral part of critical research into the animation medium, without which the theory would only consist of theoretical assumptions but lacking practical implications. The skill of actual animation film production is linked with formal elements of colour, shape, angles and timing, which makes the animation fun and pleasurable. This has often been disregarded in the cultural and social sciences and in film and art studies, whereas one of the main aspects of practice is to understand the nature of the materiality of the animation field. Thus, producing an animated film, observing and analysing it, begins to fill that gap in the academic literature.

My film has also an additional level, namely, that of an individual creative statement in its own right. Its thorough planning and execution have not affected its spontaneous aspects of craftsmanship, which shed light on the artistic meanings that are often forgotten when speaking of the popular animation industry, such as metamorphic processes, and the meaning of line and composition. I understand now, after critically observing it, that it is precisely because of these spontaneous creative outbursts that popular animation keeps its artistic spirit despite being industrially produced and commercial. My own practice therefore helped me to see creativity, spontaneity and authorship even in the most commercial aspects of the animation industry. My film therefore relates to the animation industry, but does not represent it literally; rather it presents itself as a set of propositions. I understand of course that my practice does not meet the full criteria of an industrial product nor has it the commercial aspects that popular animation has. Yet it utilises the same flat and graphic style of popular animation, and follows the same linear narrative structure. Overall I believe that in terms of researching narrative and representation in popular animation, my practice meets the basic criteria of the study.

Making observations on animation practice as an “insider” is novel to the popular animation literature, which is mostly written by what Elliott (1993: 45) defined in relation to a theory of education as

a group of ‘outsiders’, who claim to be experts at generating valid knowledge about practices. This claim to expertise is only too evident in the battery of procedures, methods and techniques such ‘researchers’ employ to collect and process information about insiders’ practices. They possess little resemblance to the way “insiders” process information as a basis for their practical judgements.

My research, on the contrary, is based on personal experience as well as theoretical knowledge. It thus provides an insight into how an animator such as myself critically analyses the units that bind the process of popular animation filmmaking. Among these units are the meaning within the film, its structure, its cultural influences and impact, as well as insight into the art and craftsmanship of its formal and expressive characteristics. The advantage of being both the animator and the academic is that my research is not only practice-based, but rather that the practice is grounded in theory and in turn affects it back by raising new insights concerning the theory of animation. My research can be called action reflexive research. Throughout the research, I systematically reflect, inquire and observe both my own professional practice and its context of popular animation. I believe that in that way I can develop my understanding of animation while being constantly engaged in the process of improvement and reform of both my practical and my theoretical expertise.

1.3.4 Methodology

Academic research in art and design that incorporates an element of practice is a relatively new endeavour (Gray & Malins, 1993), as opposed to research in the sciences for instance. Gray and Malins (2004: 4) further argue that at present most higher education institutions lack the expertise and resources to deliver specific training in research methods in art and design, therefore leaving such training generic and limited. For this reason there are, as yet, no well-defined and established strategies on which researchers can draw, in particular in animation, which has not

yet been the subject of broad and thorough academic research. The lack of appropriate research procedures and methodologies has forced researchers in art and design (and animation) to use those which have been established in the natural and social sciences (Gray & Malins, 1993). My research has a distinctive approach and uses a methodology which is appropriate and sympathetic to the nature of animation, but no less solid and accountable than those used in the natural and social sciences. The methodology used involves research procedures that are self-directed, intuitive, experiential and interpretative within the subject of post-modern, non-linear visual communication. That methodology relates to quantum theory as developed by Einstein, Bohr, Heisenberg and others and that applies in its broad understanding also in the field of popular animation.

The initial stage of the research laid the basis for a critical discussion of popular animation by conducting a primary textual analysis of it. This analysis has provided the support needed for the critique I am developing. Evaluation and an understanding of the context of the popular animation industry and the literature about it led to the development of the awareness towards the compounding units of popular animation film as well as its filmic structure and the presence of filmmaker's beliefs which all bear a statement behind them that form a new critical statement of how to see popular animation films. The moment this statement was constructed, I applied the knowledge gained in producing an animation film. Personal practice enriched my understanding and led to further development of this critical approach, and to further implications that may suggest further development of popular animation practice. Since my critical approach is to conduct an on-going observation of contemporary changes in the popular animation industry, the inquiry is open-ended and thus leads to further exploration of the subject. My findings imply that the popular animation films do have established political, cultural, social and artistic position within their structure.

Basic methodological assumptions

Meaning

I assume that there is no story without storyteller, hence there is no image that does not project meanings. This assumption implies that a process of understanding the meanings behind the imagery in animation film conditions an investigation into narratives and what is represented behind the imagery and the filmic structure in popular animation.

Seeing

This assumption is based on a theory that the physical ability of a person to see does not mean that s/he consciously understands what s/he sees. The edited images direct the viewer's gaze and manipulate perception and understanding of a cinematic image.

The research has two methodological structures:

a. Linear aspect

- Redefinition (ideological and cultural aspects)
- Communication (visual and technological aspects)
- Application field (commercial and perceptual aspects)

The linear structure follows the development of the popular animation filmmaking process, in which the initial stage of defining ideological and cultural aspects of popular animation imagery leads to creating a critical language. The critique made possible by having a language to create it will then be able to explore issues of visual and technological meanings that the popular animation industry communicates. This critical analysis in turn leads me as a practitioner to apply the assumptions underlying popular animation film gathered in the process of critiquing it to the practical implementation of popular animation imagery.

b. Circular aspect

- Redefinition (reflecting on problematics in meaning and narration)
- Communication (analysis of style and filmmaking process)
- Application field (contextualising my practice within animation and its implications for further study and analysis, in turn leading to a reflect on problematics in meaning and narration (again))

The circular (or recursive) structure of the research is revealed when the theoretical analysis is found to reinforce the application of the proposed critique by producing personal practice that addresses some of the issues that were revealed in the critical analysis in the first instance. This, in turn, gives rise to other issues that need further critical identification and analysis, thereby closing a circle on the way the thesis reflects on the problematic issues in popular animation.

1.4 Empirical research findings

My research redefines popular animation as an instrument, which helps animators to handle the creative communication of knowledge through a self-reflexive critical approach. This redefinition helps to answer the core question of the research as to how can popular animation develop beyond the restrictions of its former visual and narrative languages. Redefining popular animation as a structure that comprises two aspects, that of appearance and representation behind the appearance, shows how animation breaks through its previous industrial and cultural boundaries. It is clearly recognisable that animation as a medium communicates messages on a cultural level. How these messages appear on the screen is what I call in the thesis “appearance”. However, there are meanings that are communicated on a much more subtle level of understanding, i.e., in the way the aspects comprising the medium are operating and how their interrelations project certain meanings that need to be addressed. These meanings are what I am calling “representation”. My initial research into the meanings of appearances led me to understand that the formal characteristics of popular animation are shaped and manipulated by the ideology that is embedded in what these characteristics represent.

My personal practice does not merely illustrate a critical analysis of ideological discourses in popular animation but explores the ideological representation in animation imagery through the production process and the self-observation of an animator. In that sense, my practice is an essential part of the critical analysis, in which one element re-ignites the other. The actual act of filmmaking changes my initial thoughts and the analysis that was derived from simply observing and criticising the films chosen for analysis. The critical thoughts within the research therefore not only come through the brain but through the whole body and its memory of filmmaking. Therefore this study is a reflexive and self-conscious process. As part of self-observation I am aware of change taking place constantly within the research process. Initially, the research started from the outside, exploring external appearances and ideologies, and only gradually I moved to explore the inner core of popular animation to understand its artistic and cinematic mechanism and materiality.

The following aspects of the research clarify and signpost the development of popular animation beyond the restriction of its former visual and narrative framework while embracing more complex and critical thinking in contemporary practice:

1. The social and cultural shift that characterises the globalized cosmopolitan world from the late years of the 20th century on has been reflected and interpreted in popular animational meanings, narratives and representations that observe and question past social and cultural institutions.
2. Political and social issues have a direct impact on animation films due to the fact that animators embody their opinions and observations within narratives, and the formal and expressive characteristics of their films. The animators' opinions can be clearly seen, for example, in *The Incredibles*' (Disney/Pixar, 2005) cynical attitudes and the dysfunctionality of their family, and in *2 Stupid Dogs* (Hanna-Barbera, 1993), showing grotesqueness and cynical disillusionment.
3. The industrial production system shapes popular animation films in terms of their duration, movement, appearance, narrative and representation.

4. The investigation into the notion of popular animational materiality and its cinematic form situates it in the light of more complex meanings and perceptual codes.
5. My personal practice reveals that even the industrially produced commercial popular animation film has spontaneous intuitional aspects that turn it into an artistic experience, rather than being a purely commercial and industrially manipulated product. In addition, it also positions animation as a self-reflexive critical medium that combines artistic and technological capacities.

Some of the above points may have been obvious to film critics and academics, yet I have not seen these aspects applied to a critical analysis of popular animation film before. Similarly, some of these aspects seem obvious to animators or to the viewers, and so they do not speak about them or question their meaning and function.

My findings show how popular industrial animation breaks through the boundaries of its commercial framework by developing independent creative substances of the animation experience and the meanings communicated through it. These findings agree with Furniss's (1999: 29) observation that "commercial or 'industrial' animation and the independent animation both form a form of continuum under the general heading of 'modes of animation production'". She argues that "Industrially and independently produced animations are not completely separate modes of production, but are in fact interrelated." Arguably, animation as a medium has more to offer to society than simply a form of entertainment. The independent creative aspects of popular animation undermine our view of them as industrialised commercial product and reveal the intuitional and the experimental aspects that are embodied in practice. Such a discovery changes our view of popular animation and offers new productive and critical possibilities for the medium.

The discovery made in my research does not lie in revealing a new type of animation or finding fault in the old one, but in giving the audience a chance to see popular animation through different eyes. I provide an opportunity to observe how the animator thinks, perceives a movement and produces a film. That new

perspective leads to a new understanding of the medium and of the meaning that it communicates.

In my own practice I not only attempted to cover gaps in current theoretical approaches, but also to raise new questions and enrich the theoretical investigation by providing a greater critical engagement.

Part One

Shaping of Popular Drawn Animation by Ideological Discourses

Part One examines the ideological discourses that are embedded in popular narratives by analysing the meanings in the formal and expressive characteristics in popular animation in relation to their commercial exploitation. This analysis is a first step towards answering the core question of this study, namely, how can two-dimensional popular animation develop beyond the restrictions of its former visual and narrative languages. The analysis demonstrates the truth of the following propositions:

1. Central to my research is a conviction that every image implies the underlying beliefs of those who have created it. Accordingly, popular animation that is produced in the US bears the strong imprint of American political and economic power, simply because it is a product of American society. However, ideological discourses in this type of popular animation are camouflaged by the appearance of mythic entertaining, a storytelling that is unspokenly accepted by most people. Popular animated images appear familiar and therefore unthreatening, and ideological messages of commercialism can be communicated without much attention being drawn to them (Giddens, 2000: 41). For these reasons, an examination of the myths in popular animation is required.
2. Due to the fluid direction of ideological development in the Western society at the time of unfolding global economy and technological progress as elaborated by Giddens (2000), the popular animation industry works with changes in appearances and the myths surrounding them, such as those of abundance and youthfulness. The idea of abundance flows naturally from the notion of youthfulness and supports the fact that the main target audience in the popular animation market are young people. As an extension of youthful abundance, popular animation acknowledges capitalism in its narratives and merchandise but presents them in a romantic approach to life and concentrates mainly on

external appearances that support such an approach, such as in the depiction of a healthy young body. The body in popular animation is therefore experimented with, changed and manipulated so it does not undergo natural processes but rather becomes an object of fetishism.

3. Popular animation observes the structure of matter and the interactions between macroscopic and microscopic levels of the reality it depicts. Yet, unlike physics in the natural sciences, popular animational physics does not try to explain physical phenomena but simply observes and projects them to the audience. It is assumed by the animators that many of its audience are not aware of those subtle levels and abilities, and therefore see popular animation as surreal and unnatural. However, the fact that formal characteristics of popular animation are not perceived as naturalistic does not mean that they lack complexity. On the contrary, they provide a platform for profound messages and have a meaningful symbolic language, such as movement and simplicity, understanding of which may illuminate the myths used in popular animation as part of a commercial strategy.
4. The popular animation industry uses various psychological effects in the formal characteristics of popular animation film, and with the help of computer technology manufactures and edits films easily. Popular animation seems to observe and reflect on the psychology of human perception, employing these processes for commercial purposes.
5. Popular animation is situated within cinematic, televised and computerized broadcasting fields, and aims to profit through filmmaking, distributing and merchandising. To achieve that, popular animation sells fiction and fantasy while manipulating its production into distribution channels of dreams and desires. The more people watch images of dreamlike animation reality, the more their desires are influenced, which is a marketing strategy for the growing production of merchandise and dreams. In other words, desire is commercially manipulated to increase consumption.

Chapter 2:

Undermining Previous Ideological Discourses by Popular Animation

Popular animation produced in the US bears the strong imprint of American political and economic power simply by being a product of that society (Wasko, 2001: 63). However, the characteristics of a new globalized approach do not simply show the dominance of the West over the rest, but affect US narratives and representational symbols within the films as they do other countries. The characteristics of that new approach in popular animation narratives and representation illustrate change and hybridity as an integral part of life, and open-mindedness towards cultural diversity.

The investigation of ideological discourses within popular animational narratives and representation is based on the belief that every animated image is part of story telling and that there is no story / image without a storyteller. Hence, every image / story implies the underlying beliefs of the system that produces popular animation. Combined with the fact that popular animation is such an “epidemic force“ in the market for popular film, amongst different types of audiences, this shows that the audience embraces popular animation films alongside their ideological beliefs. Such an assumption requires us to explore the ideological discourses that are hidden behind entertaining animated appearances.

The ideological discourses in popular animation are concealed under a mythic appearance that is familiar and therefore unthreatening, and is accepted by most people who watch animation films. Hence, ideological messages of commercialism and imperialism, for example, can be communicated without much attention being drawn to them. Although myth is regarded as a tradition that is inherited in a society, Giddens (2000: 37) suggests that the contemporary tradition of myth in Western society is a product of the last couple of centuries, in fact, that the idea of tradition and myth itself is a modern creation (Giddens, 2000: 39). As a tradition, myth is defined by a certain truth, which enables it to avoid questions to be asked about alternative truths. Tradition and myth therefore provide a framework for action that

can go largely unquestioned (Giddens, 2000: 41). Once this statement is applied to popular animation films, it becomes clear that an examination of the myths that are used within its narratives is required. Such an examination in turn leads to an exploration of the reasons behind the animated myths, which they conceal and prevent from being questioned.

This chapter presents three substantive arguments for a discussion of ideological positions in popular animation. Section 2.1 discusses the American imperialistic commercial ideology that is embedded in popular animated myths and narratives. By analysing popular animation's use of stereotypes as part of a commercial ideology, it is possible to see how that ideology is embedded in animational narratives. Section 2.2 investigates this understanding further by showing that the commercial ideology is embedded in the films through psychological manipulation of decontextualized events, which enables the repetitive use of narratives and images. Since ideology appears to be an integral part of animational narratives and representational modes, Section 2.3 proposes to see popular animated images as complex text that positions the popular animational industry as being aware of the social and cultural changes occurring on a global level. I will show there that the popular animational industry sees its myths as a reflection of that change. Some "old" beliefs are interpreted in a new way that questions the old, while others continue to linger and are used as a commercial strategy. Popular contemporary animation seems to embrace a multi-dimensional risk society and is searching for a different maturity through animation products.

2.1 Embedding of American ideology in myths and narratives of popular animation

America being the main producer of popular animation films means that it leaves its commercial ideological imprint on the narratives of popular animation both nationally and internationally. However, changes bound up with globalization also affect American ideology, creating a new approach that gradually alters the way people perceive their reality. Giddens (2000) argues that national propaganda is losing its influence due to a change in political institutions. The initial desire of

filmmakers to emphasise America's national distinctiveness derives from it being a country of immigrants that required an approach that unified the nation. Now, however, the world is becoming a global village, and national and physical distinctiveness is less important due to a shift in approach to communications and the economy. Popular animational narratives accordingly are critically re-evaluating that which was important and distinctive before, asking, for example, how does popular animation today is presented as "American", and how does the appearance of popular animation today find its meanings through the use of stereotypes.

2.1.1 Americanization of binary and multidimensional popular animation

Up to the late 1980s, popular animation portrayed a simplified binary vision of narrative events, thus reflecting American imperialistic ideology at the time (Culbert, 1999: 257). "American" national and international values were re-signified in the films along with race, ethnicity, class and gender in order to create "simplified" terms of what is good and what is bad. These values in turn set up the character's behaviour and appearance. For example, the enemy archetype in popular American animation was usually a bad guy who threatens to rule the world. A young hero, the "good guy", who is usually white, punishes the bad guy and protects the status quo of control and of the American way of life. From the late 1980s on, a gradual shift in narratives and representation started to take place in popular animation following a socio-cultural shift that was bound up with globalization. That shift changed stereotypic binary thinking into multidimensional thinking that enabled a more critical, open approach towards what is represented in popular animation. However, this process of change takes time. Since popular animation is firmly bound by a commercial broadcasting framework, it is convenient to continue to circulate routinely the "old style" of popular animation films on the cartoon channels and in children's programs, even though new multidimensional films are gradually being introduced into the system. Thus, we are still seeing animation films today that are imbued with binary attitude.

The binary structuring of narratives and representation in animation films resulted from the continuous penetration of the world by American imperialistic commercial

ideology during the beginning and middle of the 20th century. According to Hill and Gibson (1998: 371), America is still the biggest producer of films in the world, creating about 90% of popular films that are circulated around the globe. Hence American narratives and storytelling were and are widely spread throughout the world. Being produced in America by Americans, narratives spoke about American values of good and bad at that time. Anything that was not American was defined as alien, strange and even bad. Events were simplified in order to convey such information on a level that was easily accessible by different types of audience. Funny visuals and simple stories, where everything looks familiar and understandable, have created a new type of reality, which is derived from actual observed reality but is mixed with dreams in a kind of simplistic psychedelic projection. That phenomenon can still be found in contemporary animation films. For example, in Warner's *Taz-mania* (1991-1993) TV series, characters of wild Australian animals are using commercial products that are characteristic of American way of life, such as big cars, watching television, eating take-away food and playing rugby, thus still supporting the old binary idea, as shown in other films as well. These episodes portray an easy adaptation to American contemporary culture by its characters, accepting American commercial-technological culture with joy. Since that type of binary thinking was long represented in popular narratives and images, it propagated an American way of life that became a model for imitation (De Bure, 1997: 16).

American popular animation has spread across the globe not only purely as moving imagery, but also through branches of American fast food corporations. McDonald's has become a giant world corporation that sells hamburgers as well as illustrated characters and toys. Its clients chew American food while absorbing images of American animation figures that cover the food packages as can be seen on Happy Meals for instance. Each time the meal bears both images and toys derived from Disney films, such as *The Lion King* (1994) for example due to the McDonald-Disney tie-up. McDonald's serves millions of customers every day all over the globe. This suggests that if the hamburger is agreed upon as a tasty food, those millions of customers eating these hamburgers create a connection between the taste and the drawn figures. In that way, there is a complete digestion of American culture, communicated through simplistic images, food and merchandise. Popular

animation, thus, seems to communicate ambivalent meanings. On the one hand it supports individualism through its characters, styles and narratives, which still serves commercial requirement of increasing the number of individual customers. On the other hand, popular animation flattens cultural differences and creates homogeneity and a globalized quality, based on stereotypes, and simplicity of movement and form. Giddens (2000: 72, 75) explains that these globalized qualities are in fact remains of the previous binary attitude that serve as a transitional stage to a new multidimensional approach.

That new approach was born in the last two decades of the 20th century. It alters the way people perceive their social and cultural reality in relation to political, social and cultural change on a global level. Giddens (2000: 19) argues that globalization shapes our society into something with completely new contours yet to be seen. The new approach is not yet settled or secured; it does not have a binary vision of good and bad, but is ridden with anxieties and reveals the incapacities of “old” social and cultural institutions. That new approach is clearly reflected in popular animation. For example, in Disney’s *Pokahontas 2 – Journey to a New World* (1998) that still has the remains of the binary approach in its aspects of American culture as preferable to the foreign ones, a new approach is also clearly visible. In the film the European aristocracy are portrayed as being grotesque, dishonest, hypocrite and interested mostly in power and money. The protagonist that fell in love with Pokahontas is shown as an individual, rather than as an idealistic representative of his country as in earlier films. Other films reflect the new multidimensional social shift as well, such as *Sinbad: The Legend of the Seven Seas* (DreamWorks, 2003), *Finding Nemo* (Disney/Pixar, 2003), *Shrek* (DreamWorks, 2003-2004), *The Incredibles* (Disney/Pixar, 2005). The new multidimensional approach leads us to the observation that in reality there is no good or bad and each event has a few aspects yet to be seen. The multidimensional portrayal of everyday life through popular narratives and representations is seen as full of complex qualities that enrich people’s observations of reality as well as enable them critically to observe these aspects and reflect on them. According to Giddens (2000), the new approach is therefore based upon active communication and multidimensional aspects of understanding and consciousness.

The entering of a new stage of observation of reality as communicated by popular animational narratives is riddled with complexities and ambiguities in defining and observing natural and social processes. The new multidimensional stage focuses on the process of change and the dynamic adaptability of popular animation narratives and representational modes to that change. By contrast, the old binary system of observation in popular animation had order and clarity that ultimately froze the system of expression (Taylor, 2001:14) in popular animation, with the result that the system could no longer function and therefore needed great change – a change that has now arrived. The following section observes how order and clarity were introduced into popular animational imagery by the use of stereotypes and what meanings those stereotypes bear within them.

2.1.2 Do animational stereotypes embody American ideology?

The repetitive broadcasting of American binary values through popular animational narratives has resulted in the uniformity of animation films. This



Image 1: stereotypic image in *Hello Nurse*; *Animaniacs* TV series (© 1993-1998 Warner Bros.)

uniformity of representation has further rationalised binary values with simplification and stereotypization. Stereotypes simplified complicated processes into simple elements, which were then portrayed visually in animation films. Such use of stereotypic structures in the films suggests that popular animation is not only an important cultural fantasy product but also a significant instrument of ideological authority despite its simplistic appearance. That conclusion stems from the fact that in order to choose to simplify

a process or an event, one selects carefully what to leave out from an animated image or narrative. Therefore this careful consideration by the animator is closely

linked with personal views and ideological beliefs, which certainly are then projected to the viewers.

Smart (1995: 34) indicates that according to Foucault, stereotypes have been established in Western society in order to distance the sick, the different and the dangerous, while establishing a particular knowledge about the unknown in order to maintain a feeling of safety. Contemporary Western society has adopted rationality and the scientific explanation of natural and unnatural phenomena as its basis. Yet, stereotypic images are still widely used, in popular animation films while acting emotionally and prejudicially by the animators. Stereotypes are irrational, and as stereotypic images fix knowledge, contemporary society is subdued to being irrational in the same way as the ritual societies of the past. It seems that contemporary Western society has adopted the irrational as a legitimate way of understanding the world, whereas a few years ago, this was considered a shameful and primitive approach to life. Popular binary animation films exaggerate and stereotype the ideas projected by them in order to clarify and explain them. Among these ideas there are also ideas about political and social structures. In everyday life, viewers are reminded of their place in the life of their nation in many little ways. Yet this reminding is especially strong in popular binary animation. The American way of life is suggested as the preferable one that protects world citizens, and is in the interest of “the people”. It is so constantly present in animation that it is not consciously registered as a reminder.

Hillel (1991), in his analysis of popular binary animation, argues that dominant ideological positions are encoded in popular imagery, and this is discernible in many examples of popular binary animation. In his argument Hillel concentrates on particular animation films that encourage support for American armed forces in their war against evil. For example, the *Teenage Ninja Turtles* animation series (Warner Bros., 1987-1995) represent young American heroes who fight against evil. In the episode *Attack of the Big Macc*, the characters suggest that their alien friend, The Big Macc, become a warrior for peace. In that way they promote certain values under the idea of a “peace warrior”. The words “warrior” and “peace” are contradictory in their nature. Thus by creating the idea of “peace warrior”, the

animators supported the idea that people need someone who will fight or use physical power in order to achieve peace. Animation here functions as propaganda, which subsequently supports military purposes. Billig (1997: 81), who explores the notion of contemporary nationalism, notes that “typically, people ascribe more stereotypic traits to outgroups – “them” than to ingroups “us”; “we” often assume “ourselves” as the standard, whereas it is always the “other” who breaks faith, acts dishonestly and starts aggressive spirals”. Accordingly, popular animation has created “goodies” and “baddies” in its narratives that play the role of arbitrator between the power and the viewer. Meanings are stereotyped in order to help the viewer understand them. Yet a large number of simple and constantly changing stereotypes make it difficult to remember them. This system rules out ambivalence. Power relationships require an absence of understanding. Yet in animation, the negation of the ambivalence of events and their simplification exists in order to produce a certain understanding of the narrative. Information relating to national and international events of political importance is turned into entertainment in popular animation. While popular binary animation may have “entertainment value”, it is ideologically rooted in economic and technological power. Little is said in animation directly about politics, but the way its characters and their behaviour are represented project political opinions and thus a certain unspoken ideology. Paradoxically, while more thought is put into filmmaking in contemporary films, representation still remains stereotyped and based on the exaggeration of an image. Stereotypes are used to simplify and clarify animational narratives within a commercial and industrial framework.

On the one hand, popular animation in its binary stage uses stereotypic images to simplify and clarify ideological values. On the other hand, the simplification of narrative events flattens cultural differences and creates homogeneity and a globalized quality, which emphasise external appearances. The homogenised global external appearances symbolise the emergence of an international system of perception, which replaces the binary system that governed the world for half a century (Taylor, 2001: 23).

America, being the main popular film producer, has imprinted its national values (Culbert, 1999: 257) on popular animation films, which are re-signified through stereotypes. Stereotypes emphasise the external appearances and formal characteristics of popular animated images while having a globalized homogenised quality that serves as a transitional stage to a new multidimensional approach. The defining quality of that approach is its integration and unity, which paradoxically, raise the issue of complexity of these unified popular animational images as they are broadcast around the world. This complexity starts with understanding that these unifying images do not work the same in all places in the world, thus indicating inner structural contradictions and political imbalances. The unifying images create mutually defining connections, which Taylor (2001: 23) argues show that nobody is really in control, and that the previous orderly binary thinking is crumbling. However, using stereotypic images with a globalized quality enables popular animation to ease its wide distribution. The next section observes how these images are linked to a commercial approach.

2.2 Animation technique as device to increase commercial appeal of popular animation

Animation film, being a sequence of different images projected one after another, requires the viewer to remember the previous frames in order to link the following images into a flowing movement. Although the actual change of frames requires the making of logical connections in the viewer's memory, events and interconnections between them require emotional memory. Feelings towards present and past, such as hope and nostalgia, are emotions that enable an individual to deal mentally with experiences. Popular animation produces an audience that is receptive to its own further commercial exploitation via the marketing of the products derived from the animation films. Popular animation industry therefore takes the viewers' acceptance of the ideological basis of the animation films, takes elements of the animated events and reshapes them into marketable products that are divorced from the animated film.

2.2.1 Animated images and their stimulation of the sale of merchandise

The production technique of popular animation comprises an image and its change in time, i.e., by projecting 24 images per second on the screen it creates the illusion of movement. Popular animation industry tends to produce merchandise that relates on an emotional level to the animated events in films, while actually being divorced from their narrative context. Debord (1992: 80) argues that by a very dense concentration of images and spectacular representations, emotions are shifted into a state of banality. The fascination with the spectacular images in contemporary popular animation stems from an aesthetic sense more than from an understanding of these images. Debord further argues that experiencing aesthetic pleasure while seeing an image produces an addiction as well as an automatic viewing / reading by the viewer.

A multitude of details and technical effects cause images to appear as having inhuman qualities even if the image itself is about human feelings (Hill and Gibson,



Image 2: computerized sense of plastic toy-like feeling in *Monsters Inc.* (© 2001 Disney/Pixar)

1998: 173). For example, the film *Monsters Inc.* (Disney/Pixar, 2001) portrays the friendship between a child and a monster. Yet despite the fact that the main subject is human feelings, its visual effects create a sense

of plastic and of the toy-like feeling of McDonald's. This feeling works in well with the fact that the figures in the animation are already sold as toys in McDonald's franchises. In other words, feelings become commodities, and the emotional identity of an animated figure becomes a technology. Popular animation manufactures emotions in order to produce and reproduce the same products commercially. The merchandise evokes a memory connection to the film, but also has its own reality, being autonomous products. Crucially, the popular animation industry constructs a

new narrative, not merely in the juxtaposition of separate images, frames or objects but in the way that the viewer activates the temporality and the narrative through the physical action of buying the object and using it. The viewer is in control of the temporal relationship with those images and objects. The suggested outcome of the manipulation of memory and narratives in popular animation suggests that the viewer become an observer of the experience and, in turn, when buying a film or a merchandise is observed by the animators that produce films and products for the viewer.

The ready-made feelings that are embedded both in the popular animation films and their merchandise, and which are triggered instantaneously, stimulate short fleeting memories that create forgetfulness and increase both products' commercial appeal. Popular animation films have no past in the sense of looking back and learning from previous mistakes, or of undergoing a process of change, both of which are directly related to time and physical change. Hence animation films move forward, thus existing only in the present moment. Yet the appearance of fleetingness contradicts its materiality, which deals with human behaviour and nature, which do not change. That fleeting appearance, as expressed through merchandise derived from animation films, brings the viewer into bodily contact with a film that deals with human nature and leads the viewer to become more critical and aware of the film's contents as film continues to live through a merchandise.

2.2.2 Animation's short memory of decontextualized events

Fleeting appearances in popular animation emphasise the emergent moment, which repeatedly constitutes and reconstitutes the flux of time, harbouring a momentum that keeps everything in constant motion. Taylor (2001: 24) explains that the word *moment* comes from Latin *momentum*, which means movement. Popular animation presents movement in a form that suggests an inherent simplicity, but which in fact does not possess it. Movement and imagery in popular animation hide within them an inherent complexity, as their boundaries cannot be established due to constant change and adaptation to the next move. That complexity is in fact emphasised by the increase in the number of images to which the viewer is exposed

as well as their speed of representation. This phenomenon in contemporary popular animation indicates the industry's growing awareness of its multidimensionality, stirred up by notions of globalisation.

Hollinshead (1998: 88) argues that a large amount of detail in popular animation films tends to convince the viewer that these details are based on true events, and could not be made up as they are so many. The plurality of detail seems to indicate a plurality of knowledge, yet the quantity of details does not necessarily indicate their importance or their relevance to reality or to the viewers' understanding. Wasko (2001: 174) asserts that since the viewer cannot perceive all the details at once, their memory changes from being active and adaptive to not being able to analyse what is seen. As the viewer cannot perceive all the physical details in the film, instead, the viewer's memory will absorb meanings behind these details selectively, for example, motifs that are constantly repeated, such as "happiness", "magic" and "fun". For example, in Disney/Pixar's *A Bug's Life* (2001), the protagonist walks amongst the beautiful plants when he arrives to the bug's city. The background in the scene is full of amazing almost hyperrealistic details, yet the viewer cannot see them all by simply watching that scene once. What remains then for the viewer to remember is the sense of magic in that little bug's city and a feeling of fun and adventure that the protagonist experiences. The soundtrack helps the animators to emphasise the sense of happiness as well as supporting the narrative development. Reality in popular animation becomes a "magic nostalgia", a floating memory of a dream, where some parts of the events depicted are connected to actuality and some are imaginary. Memory, which aims to deal with the past in order to establish explanations for the future, loses its connection with context-in-time and becomes an image. Decontextualized memory is adjusted emotionally in popular animation films to alter events, their time and location by means of reproduction.

Furthermore, Virilio (2000: 8-9) argues that in a globalized world with its advanced use of tele-communications technologies, the sense of a dimensional context that people occupy (its uniqueness, history and values) has been lost together with a sense of distance. The continents have lost their geographical foundation and been replaced by tele-continents in global communications systems. Similarly, in

popular animation past myths are reshaped and re-appear without connection to their origins. Popular animation brings characters from different stories together and mixes them in a decontextualized manner where the characters from previous stories promote a new legend. Wasko (2001: 142) gives the example of Disney's animated *Pocahontas* (1996), in which not only the history of colonial events is ignored, but even parts of the original, recorded story of Pocahontas are adapted to commercial needs. The facts of young Pocahontas being kidnapped, forced to become a Christian, wedded to an old aristocrat at the age of 15, and dying of tuberculosis at the age of 21 were all ignored in the film. Clearly, the memory of colonial events has become vague and foggy as a result of rewriting their history.

Hollinshead (1998: 75) asserts that these events are represented in popular animation in a sweet friendly form, where even colonial racism is shown as appealing and for the sake of maintaining the historical fiction that the colonisation of America and other places was benign. Such manipulation works not only on the viewers' historical memory, but also on the meanings of things represented in animation film. Thus, acts which were violent and offensive or immoral in the past, are communicated as banal to the contemporary memory. Nevertheless, a new myth has been structured in relation to Pocahontas's story, in which the Indians are presented as the peaceful keepers of nature. This myth in turn attempts to discard the old one, in which the white European men are the powerful guys with might on their side, who use destruction in order to conquer, colonise and re-educate the rest of the population. Clearly, such a change of the old myths is the beginning of a new multi-dimensional shift, where the old myths are partly shattered to enable the coexistence of differences, such as in the new approach in *Pocahontas* (Disney, 1996) where native Indians exist alongside the white men, while holding on to binary values of "goodies" and "baddies". The defeat of the baddies is still a form of self-praise of the familiar and the American.

It seems that popular animation does not aim to represent historic events, but simply uses historic titles or a general historic "package" to inspire its own narratives. Problematically, labouring under American notions of rewriting history,

popular animation has produced a completely rewritten history, which will probably remain so in the viewers' memory unless they make an effort to inform themselves.

The duration of an animated image as remembered by the viewer depends not on the physical duration of its projection but on the viewer's ability to remember that event. In that sense popular animation works on the "emotional" memory of a viewer long after the images have disappeared from the screen, thus continuing the imprint of animated reality. While memory is adjusted emotionally in animation films, the events that are portrayed in popular animation are altered to prevent a conflict between the re-adjusted events. Each event is therefore presented as if it were of the same importance, whether it is of the past or the present. In that way, past myths are reshaped and re-appear in a decontextualized manner to promote new type of myths.

2.3 Contemporary social and cultural change in myths in animation

Popular contemporary animation takes a rather complex approach to its narratives and representation, one that reflects on living in a global age, which, according to Giddens (2000: 35), means coping with a diversity of new situations of risk and ambiguity. Living with constant risk shapes people into bolder and more active and critical individuals. This new approach to risk and globality leads to a more democratising and critical outlook on social relationships and institutions, reflected in popular animation re-evaluating its attitude to binary definitions of what it means to be good or bad, and turning the notions of national, local and traditional into a wish for a global approach. Being an industrially-produced commercial medium, popular animation links its new global ideas with a commercial strategy that manipulates its viewers' desire to watch its films continuously. Yet it still keeps its openness and instability as part of it continuously shifting along with social changes. Popular animation reviews various past divisions within itself as a medium, including the division between children and adult commodities. Adults are therefore invited to step aside from their adult role and re-evaluate it from a simpler, child-like perspective.

2.3.1 Animation and multidimensional risk in “old” institutions

Living in the age of globalisation means that communication systems are open and interrelated, and thus incomplete and constantly changing. An immense amount of information, images and details leaves people to deal with things on an intense emotional level much more than on the rational and logical one that characterised the enlightened rationalism of only 50-60 years ago (Taylor, 2001:100-101). Unlike in binary value systems, in which causes and effects are balanced in relation to each other, in our globalized multidimensional world complex reactions that reach backwards and forwards derive their critical analysis from previous institutions and values.



Image 3: issue of relationships in *Shrek 2*.
(© 2004 Dreamwork)

Popular animation supports this new shift and moves its attention from binary definitions of goodies and baddies onto the notion of relationships. For example, in DreamWorks’s *Shrek 2* (2004), characters undergo a process of self-exploration in order to improve their relationships. A similar focus within the narratives is seen in other films as well, for example, in *Lilo and Stitch* (Disney/Pixar, 2002) and *The Road to El Dorado* (DreamWorks, 2000). While popular animation engages the eternal mythological issue of relation-

ships globally, the national seems to be forgotten or ignored. Yet, mythology, Harvey (1989: 35) notes, is connected to national character, which could be seen in the use of names, locations and meanings. According to Giddens (2000), who in his book *Runaway World* speaks about notions of national character and tradition in the time of global changing, the word “national” means an emphasis on local and family-like traditions, in contrast to a wish for the global, the universal, beyond places and time. Thus DreamWorks’s *Shrek 2* (2004) shows that Shrek’s in-laws

reside in the richest area of Hollywood. While travelling in the city, the viewer can recognize the environment from popular live-action films and tourist images. However, more than just providing the viewer with the opportunity to recognize similarities and changes in the locations in animation films, the narratives based on folklore and cultural myths in popular animation are also changing. They have retained external appearances that are similar to those in the binary age, but their internal structure has been moulded into something new. Hence, the idea of magical help from outside in the shape of a fairy or some enchantment is presented in an ironic and cynical manner in *Shrek 2*, being commercially and politically manipulated in the form of a fairy godmother who owns a commercial corporation for the production of desires. The critical observation of old familiar institutional structures gives rise to questions and doubts about them. The stereotypes of and generalisations about the old and known therefore are undermined and reconstructed. As this critical approach is open and mutable, it leaves the viewer with a sense of ambiguity and unpredictability that characterise the contemporary multidimensional approach.

Ambiguity and unpredictability in animation films are bound to a sense of immediacy that is part of the commercial framework of distribution and profit. Immediacy is created in popular animation through limited timing of narrative due to the commercial limitation of broadcasting times, speedy images and rapid turn-over of short popular animation films on the animation channels. However, Bourdieu (1999:30) argues that speed presumably makes it difficult for the viewer to analyse the meanings communicated in those films, as it is difficult to think logically and sensibly in such a viewing. Paradoxically, commercial animation, despite being pumped out as many films, merchandise and imagery, also is structured so that the viewer will be able to follow its main message since otherwise viewers may become bored and dissatisfied with its products. Thus, popular animation films, especially those that appear on cartoon channels, project pre-digested, common and familiar subjects in order to prevent misunderstanding by the viewer. Hence, popular animation broadcasts repeatedly and rapidly already digested knowledge alongside small amounts of new information. As part of that commercial strategy, skills and products exist in the films' narratives as if they are ready-made and do not need any

investment of efforts by the characters. Popular animation portrays a life that is supported by commercial technological products, which make life easier. Yet, the spontaneity of the drawings and the immediacy of the animated experience are created in a mainly non-spontaneous process of working on every frame of the film, editing it and manipulating its narrative as explained in Part Two of the thesis. Popular animation, therefore, portrays an image of a life that is different from the one that is encountered in everyday life.

2.3.2 Search for different adulthood or maturity through animation products

Virilio (2000: 94) argues that the mark of modernity is not growth or human progress, but the refusal to get older. Becoming older seems to be associated with a fixed perception of life and a difficulty to adjust to changes. Hence, contemporary society desires to escape the consolidation of the self. Virilio, just as Giddens (2000: 2), sees a potential for a new, more democratised multidimensional society in which people free themselves from the habits and prejudices of the past in order to improve the future. Giddens (2000: 22) explains that

all previous cultures including the great early civilizations of the world such as Rome or traditional China have lived primarily in the past. They have used the ideas of fate, luck, or the will of the gods where we now tend to substitute risk. A positive embrace of risk is the very source of that energy which creates wealth in a modern economy.



Image 4: cynical approach to heroism in *The Incredibles*.
(© 2005 Disney/ Pixar)

Popular animation goes along with that approach to risk and instability. A character in a popular animational narrative often represents a mixture of child-like flexibility in behaviour and appearance and of adult critical thinking. Such a mixture of child-like behaviour and adult thinking positions “joy of life” as the main message of animated film despite the unpredictable adventurous events that might result from such a stance. These narratives are actually made by adults who desire to preserve the playfulness of one’s life as a child. Seeing life as a joyful, effortless game has become a new perspective on life (Bauman, 1995: 23), one that has resulted from patterns of thought and behaviour previously prevalent in society. Hence, popular animation reflects a social image whose reality was created in the past (Wiserman & Groves, 1997: 98). The desire for a joyful, easy-going life is now found in popular animation as opposed to previous concepts of what is “bad” and limiting. However, films like *The Incredibles* (Disney/Pixar, 2005), *Powerpuff Girls* (Hanna Barbera, 1998-2004), *Batman: The Animated Series* (Warner Bros., 1992-1995) and several others still deal with punishment of whoever is considered to be the “bad”.

Leslie (2002: 173) asserts that addiction to a spectacle of punishment is a result of a connection of the masses to a moral that is applied to them. Thus it happens that in animation “punishments” happen again and again. It appears to be natural that those who are controlled take the rules that are applied to them much more seriously than those who dominate them with those rules. Therefore, when a child in *The Incredibles* (Disney/Pixar, 2005) is told to behave in a certain way, he does so without asking too many questions because he trusts those who control him. Yet the parents of that child, who had made those rules, could easily change them in

response to events, e.g., changes in the child's environment that need an appropriate reaction. The new individualistic multidimensional approach that is now being developed evolves around a search for something different, something that changes the previous limitations, opens up the system and enables a free and risk-full range of possibilities that enable the individual to experience life for himself.

Part of that desire to mix and change is expressed in a growing ambiguity between children's commodities and adults' commodities. More and more adults watch animation films and play video games, whereas children actually are becoming more and more mature and sophisticated (Goodman, 2001). Goodman (2001) argues that "the generation that grew up on Nintendo/Sega/ EA Sports and virtual reality experiences is already with us, and they possess disposable income in abundance; children from the ages of 4-12 alone possess \$29 billion of annual purchasing power". He further argues that "today a dedicated 15 year-old with a basic software package could do a passing fair job of replicating almost anything in the (animation) film" and therefore has become a critical viewer of the contemporary animation. More animation films therefore become a combination of professional adult qualities and free childish imagination, such as *Ren and Stimpy Show* (Nickelodeon, 1991-1996) and *Cow and Chicken* (Hanna-Barbera, 1997-1999). One outcome of this adult perspective behind popular animational filmmaking is that narratives now reference live-action films and jokes from them, and it is doubtful that children can relate to those references. For example, Disney-Spielberg's *Who framed Roger Rabbit?* (1988) refers to the humour of the classical film noir style, which children would not recognise. DreamWorks's *Shrek 2* (2004) refers to Hollywood and its manufacturing of dreams, and Disney/Pixar's *The Incredibles* (2005) cynically refers to the shattered American dream of a hero, the reconstruction of American family values and the approval of coming second, which is considered a new value. Popular animation films have always had an extra layer of communicated messages built in to please the grown-up viewer. However, *The Simpsons* (20th Century Fox, 1989-2005) was the first film to use animation that was openly not "just for children". Another seminal show was Nickelodeon's *Ren and Stimpy Show* (Nickelodeon, 1991-1996), which to many young adults broke the mould and

brought back the glory days of animation. It was a show that appealed also to older “kids”.

Ebenkamp (1999) explains that some adults have developed a toy collector mentality (collecting toys and being attached to children’s products) that was driven by baby boomers, who do not seem to want to grow up and go to work hard in a fixed binary system of the past. Instead, they decorate their desks with Happy Meal gifts, while dreaming of new, adventurous and fresh possibilities. Dorfman and Mattelart (1984: 20), in fact, further argue that from its beginning the popular animation industry aimed to produce animation mostly for adults but within a ‘child colouring and appearance’. They argue that in the case of The Walt Disney Company this happened because Walt Disney was dissatisfied with his childhood and wanted to recreate it anew in his adult life. It might well be that other animation studios were affected by sociological and psychological factors as well. In popular animation films the child represents the inner core of every adult, which is the fluidity and freshness of continuous development that is buried deep under an adult’s anxieties and self-image.

More recently, however, popular animation reflects social change by portraying narratives riddled with anxiety and instability that directly mirror the current transitional stage in the development of a more globalized society in terms of risk and ambiguity. Popular animation re-examines that society by a critical evaluation of its characters and their environment. In such a time of transition myths are moulded into something new, something which has not yet been defined. Creating speedy, rapidly changing animation imagery supports the sense of instability and urgency of a multidimensional risk society. In that society, more and more adults watch popular animation films and consume its merchandise. Therefore it is assumed that these adults are searching for a simpler approach to life to emotionally stabilise their perception of life. On the other hand, it also indicates their search for a new, flexible and open-minded approach to life, to enable a multidimensional and subjective experience of life as opposed to the previous binary, fixed vision of life.

2.4 Summary

This chapter has identified a few binary myths that served American commercial ideological discourses in popular two-dimensional animation, such as “goodies” and “baddies”, and the relationships between characters. The new multidimensional approach re-examines these myths in relation to issues of entertainment and social values. The discussion of ideology is itself socially constructed and changes over time alongside the issue of its discussion. Examining ideological discourses in popular animational narratives enables me to analyse how popular animation can be changed within its theoretical framework. Thus, new multidimensional myths can be now observed in relation to their projection of meanings in the films’ narratives and appearances.

Chapter 3:

New Ideological Discourses in Popular Animation

Reflecting Social and Cultural Change

Traditional binary imperialistic American myths in popular animation are undermined as old frameworks are used to portray novel contemporary attitudes to the contents of these myths. This chapter follows the new myths that have been produced in the narratives of popular animation as part of its commercial and industrial approach and its adaptation to social changes. Since it takes time to comprehend and critically analyse what is happening in contemporary society, popular animation industry focuses in the meantime on the externalized aspects of that change as a representation of it.

Externalized changes are expressed more easily by aesthetic notions, such as popular animation imagery portraying a youthful body as a medium of visual consumption. Among these new externalized myths, abundance and youthfulness are emphasized. The idea of abundance flows naturally from the notion of youthfulness and supports the fact that the main target audience for the popular animation market is young people. Popular animation did not invent the idea of youthfulness but is merely responding to a popular trend in contemporary society. Being young and independent is treated as being omnipotent, radiating abundance in every way, including in terms of money. As an extension of that youthful abundance, popular animation acknowledges capitalism in its narratives and merchandise as a romantic approach to life. That approach, according to Campbell (1989:20), has initiated in the eighteenth century, where a fashion of manifesting one's emotional states signified the reception of pleasure and pain, both emotions creating gratifying feelings, which were adopted alongside with Romantic thought. By the close of the eighteenth century, the act of buying products resulted from a continuous desire for pleasure and pleasant feelings; the goods were and still are bought not so much for their specific use as for what they symbolise, means of self-gratification. In such a way, Campbell (1989:227) argues, the individual is situated between 'dream and reality, pleasure and utility'.

This chapter considers three substantive arguments with regard to the new myth of abundance and youthfulness in popular animation. Section 3.1 discusses the representation of the animated body as an object of consumerism, which is clearly inspired by Western society. The body in popular animation is therefore experimented with, changed and manipulated so it does not undergo natural processes that are directly related to it, and thus becomes an object of fetishism. Section 3.2 demonstrates that this attitude stems from a commercial strategy which leads to products and a lifestyle that sell youth, power and individualism. Youthfulness is presented as being wild, powerful and free, which goes hand in hand with popular animation's tendency to present anthropomorphized animals as its main characters. The half-animal, half-human characters are presented as an embodiment of the old traditional binary mythology and the new multidimensional mythology of multidimensional contemporary popular animation. Section 3.3 expands on the notion of youthful freedom as being closely linked with the idea of abundance, presenting it as the natural characteristic of a young and omnipotent character. That notion of abundance supports popular animation's core concept of capitalism, in which money flows easily and effortlessly and is not gained by hard physical work. That concept follows on from contemporary types of work that do not demand physical power and effort but rather intellectual capacities, such as working with computer software and globalized technologies. Popular animation therefore portrays capitalism as a system that helps one to follow one's heart's desire and makes life easier as capitalism is framed by a romantic ethic of a continuous desire for pleasure and pleasant feelings (Campbell, 1989).

3.1 Body as object of visual consumption

In popular animation representation is structured on the basis of its thorough observation of actual reality. Yet despite its naturalistic appearances, the physiology of the body seems to appear different and unreal. However, as animation is a thoroughly controlled medium in which every single act, word and image is thought through and analysed carefully before it appears on the screen, I would argue that there is a reason behind that unreal appearance. Lack of conventional physiology in

popular animation seems to reflect a contemporary attitude towards the body which, according to Baudrillard (1999: 14), is being used to sell commodities and services as well as being itself a ‘consumed object.’ If the body is disregarded in its natural attributes and processes, then a different attitude towards pain and suffering is proposed. Popular animation experiments with that attitude towards the body, in terms of its perception of the body as a source of emotion and pain and also in terms of its natural processes, both of which are manipulated in animation film. The body is emphasized as being of aesthetic, narcissistic value.

3.1.1 Animated body as source of pleasure, fear and pain and its relation to natural physiological processes

The attitude shown by popular animation films towards the body has been developed in relation to a social trend to exaggeration and distortion into the grotesque. The perception of the body in popular animation as unchanging and dispensable portrays the body as an object that is bounded in its essence only to external appearance and the desire that it produces in the viewer. On the one hand, a character can be easily manipulated and changed and in that sense it is unstable. On the other hand, the body in popular animation films easily and effortlessly returns to its original condition and indicates a kind of “permanency” of physiology that seems to reflect a desire for comfort as it is convenient not to need to change.



Image 5: Cow in *Cow and Chicken*. (© 1999 Hanna-Barbera)

Hill and Gibson (1998: 340) argue that the body in film is presented mostly as a source of pleasure, fear and pain. For example, the cow in the film *Cow and Chicken* (Hanna-Barbera, 1997-1999) has an udder that is depicted as an organ

that bangs into various objects and is an object of grotesque painful experience which also is a mean of satisfaction and pleasure as the cow saves her brother or helps him. The body is disregarded and is rather seen as a means for visual pleasure. This idea has its roots again in the Romantic thought of the 18th century, in which Campbell (1989: 140) argues, the reception of pleasure and pain as gratifying feelings. Has been established as part of the rise of consumerism and search for pleasure. Another example is Jessica Rabbit in *Who framed Roger Rabbit?* (Disney and Spielberg, 1988), who is the source of pain and pleasure by means of the sexuality of her body. The feminine characters drip sexuality and have the same physical proportions with no connection to age, even when it is only the character of a small girl, such as in the *Little Mermaid* (Disney, 1989). These conventions ruling physical proportions in popular animation film represent a general convention ruling



Image 6: Sexy Jessica in *Who framed Roger Rabbit*.
(© 1998 Disney)



Image 7: Sexy girl in *Little Mermaid*.
(© 1989 Disney)

contemporary Western taste in sexuality. Dorfman and Mattelart (1984: 39) argue that in Disney films characters like Minnie and Daisy are a feminine prototype that exert a visual attraction but are not given any physical abilities to actually embody their own sensuality. In an attempt to create educational films without “negative influences” such as cigarettes and alcohol, Disney animators have created a model of sexual education through the rejection of sexual touch and desires, creating a sexual world without sex. The characters tempt with something that will never happen, under the name of “proper education”.

Consequently, Hall (1997: 286-287) argues that the emphasis on sexuality as a solely aesthetic object leads to hypersexuality. As a result, the body is emphasized as an object,

and is experimented with, changed and manipulated in popular animation. For example, in the episode *Disease Fiesta* in the *I am Weasel* series (Hanna-Barbera, 1997-1999), Doctor Weasel is capable of moving one part of the body into the place of another and, for example, making another character's torso disappear, leaving its head attached to its foot.

Similarly, Ritzer (2000: 163) argues that in contemporary society the physiological, the bodily, is not important. In such a society, pain and suffering are sometimes disregarded, if we describe pain as a process in which neurological signals are transferred to the brain as a result of injury. But pain involves a process where time is needed for a signal to reach the brain, and travel back to the injured body. However, in popular animation such a natural process, as actually in real life where food, clothing and sometimes even medications provide instantaneous solutions, is expected to be instant. Therefore popular animation portrays instantaneous healing of injuries, without any process taking place, as for example in the film mentioned above, *Disease Fiesta* in the *I am Weasel* series (Hanna-Barbera, 1997-1999). Despite the fact that the character's organs are removed and relocated to completely new, unnatural locations, the body seems to be able to heal itself miraculously and instantaneously. As viewers, we are aware that there is both physiological time and the time of the story. The animated characters are not subject to physiological time, which are the natural processes of birth, growth, recovery from injury and death, that is, processes that are connected to the actual body. The characters are not born, they do not grow in time, and they do not die. That observation leads me to assume that popular animation portrays the human essence, the eternal human spirit that gives us a feeling of unchanging essence regardless of our age. Poole (2000: 68) notes that "we are used to thinking of "life" as a single, sacred thing, the totality of our experiences". However, popular animation films redefine "life" as expendable, as an iterable part of a larger campaign.

Popular animation is a leisure product that supports the "ideology" of a body that lacks natural physiological processes, by portraying the body in films as having only aesthetic value. Popular animation is perceived through our eyes. The sight as a sense is conditioned culturally and socially to fulfil commercial needs (Virilio, 1994:

6). Seeing certain things as pleasant or convenient is a judgement based on the aesthetics of the society that conditions the attitudes underlying the judgement. The popular animation industry admires the aesthetics of the body, the body as an ideal of beauty, in order to support the social conditioning of sight that admires such aesthetics. Sight or vision has become a norm of narcissistic visualization (Virilio, 1994: 13).

3.1.2 Body viewed narcissistically rather than functionally

Contemporary society nurtures the idea of the body as an object of idolization and admiration. However, worshipping and watching the body is conditioned to refer to a suntanned and thin body (Foucault, 1980: 57) that needs to be taken care of and nurtured so that it will be suntanned and thin enough. Yet health does not include indications of watching a body, rather just the possession of a healthy body. The image of such a body is the starting point for the pursuit of beauty and fitness, and is expressed through the appearance of a youthful and thin body in popular animation.

The pursuit of body idolization requires sight, not touch. This allows Baudrillard (1999: 14) to argue that the commodified body is viewed narcissistically rather than functionally. Baudrillard (1999: 132) asserts that the subject of the body is rediscovered and becomes a salvation. The body is no more flesh but a new aesthetic value, a religion. The body is distanced from the viewer – it is an image, an idea. In popular animation, as a



Image 8: Masculine aggressiveness and power in *Batman*.
(© 1993 "Be a Clown", Warner Bros.)

direct reflection of the social trend of observing the body, narratives are preoccupied not with a healthy body, but with a thin, suntanned body, as these are fashionable, watchable qualities, preferred by contemporary culture. Popular animation stresses the physical appearance even more by showing how characters become objects. since close-ups and static sexual poses produce an essence of an object, not a person.

Male characters, even though they are not depicted as sexual, have an exaggerated depiction of their masculine body. The emphasis on muscles indicates that a viewer may take visual pleasure in them rather than contemplate the body for its implied physical power or ability. It is interesting to note that popular animation films often portray the body through stereotypes of either sexuality or war-like aggressiveness. Nurturing of the body on the one hand and fear of the aggressiveness of the body on the other hand encourage a search for meanings. Baudrillard (1999: 14) argues that such a search is attained again through the body, and not through the soul, or through feelings of love. This preoccupation with the body, changing fashions and gimmicks, brings a new perception of life. However, images of the body as object are material and satisfy only one sense at a time, leaving the viewer with a desire for more. These desires are endless and stronger than knowledge. In turn, they establish the ideology that locates the commercial system in contemporary society. Physical power, violence and dramas are myths exploited in popular animation as visual gimmicks to attract viewers. Yet, according to Baudrillard (1999: 178), in the recent past, the myth of power and violence expressed war-patriotism and a passion that followed the fixed perceptions of a binary society that knew what was “right” and what was “wrong”. Contemporary perception, on the contrary, is governed by the principles of uncertainty and an inability to predict the dynamics of behaviour and content, which is why it concentrates instead on external expression of appearances.

Popular animation films seem to reflect on the changes in contemporary, multidimensional, fluid society by interpreting the information that animators receive from the observation of their social and cultural environment in terms of a

form, in particular the form of a body. That interpretation enables me then to abstract from its “material substrate” more ideological lines of inquiry, such as an analysis of these forms in terms of the ideology of capitalism and commercialism, which they serve. In other words, this aesthetised body serves multidimensional animation differently than binary one. Whereas in binary popular animation, body was treated with a certain sense of perfection and sacredness and a type of naturalism, in multidimensional popular animation body is depicted as mutable, grotesque and less fixed.

Preoccupation with the body as an object of observation, specifically of its physical capabilities, further establishes its position as a material object. The popular animation industry portrays the physical qualities of a body that symbolizes a certain idea in relation to social conventions that are supposed to satisfy viewers’ expectations. On the other hand, they promote a desire to see more of these images, using the body and its manipulation as a visual gimmick to attract viewers. Consequently, both the visual appearances of the body and its representation in popular animation are used as a commercial device.

As popular animation films and merchandise are associated with young people, and in contemporary society that means young people with a thin, healthy body as well as charged with optimism, hope and inexperience, it is convenient for the popular animation industry to nurture animated characters that are young and individualistic since they will project their qualities onto the viewers. There is also the purely industrial aspect of creating an individual, youthful character to consider, which makes it easier to produce a film as there are literally fewer details required to depict a young person. For example to depict a baby one needs only to show the outline of a face, eyes and mouth to portray the essence, whereas to depict a grown up, one needs to show little lines and shapes that convey that person’s personality.

3.2 Young characters in popular animation reflecting social trends

Physical beauty and power define what it means to be young in popular animation films, as opposed to time, growth and development. Youth is an object of desire and

thus is commodified through films and merchandise aiming to attract an audience which can be expected to follow the same trend. Preoccupation with one's appearance nurtures an individual's ego, which is ideal for commodification.

Rationality and intelligence as the basis of society and social relations, and the development of science have been closely associated with youthfulness and an inquiring mind to the extent that they are often associated with the age of enlightenment (Levi-Strauss, 2001). Taylor (2001: 204) argues that "intelligence is precisely this process of selecting relevant information carefully so that it can skilfully and purposefully destroy the rest". Hence, a certain attitude has been developed, where there was no place for age, the process of maturing or irrational emotional states. This attitude can be seen in many binary popular animation films. Popular binary animation films being closely connected to and situated within the social and cultural conditions of that attitude, portray youthful representations for its protagonists to convey "good" binary educational values to the viewers. What a youthful character in popular animation films has started to change while still being widely used as a leading motif. The significance of youthful protagonists in popular animation, and the roles they play, are in a continuous process of adaptive change.

Hill and Gibson (1998: 195) address the individualistic youth culture that has had a strong hold on society up till now. They explain that since the spread of a mass culture in the 1960s, the young adolescent figure has become a central market category. The young figure is perceived as a model or example who exploits all available resources to help him progress towards the achievement of his aims. Popular binary animation has reflected this attitude by developing the figure of a successful, youthful protagonist who acts without encountering any difficulties. Many popular animation companies, such as Disney, Warner Bros., 20th Century Fox and Hanna-Barbera, portray a youthful central protagonist who alone can master the core problem posed in a film's narrative. For example, *The Iron Giant* (Warner Bros., 1999) portrays a young boy who alone succeeds in developing friendly relationships with a giant alien robot, while most of the city and the military forces are afraid of it. The boy represents a powerful person who can withstand any type of weapon to protect his friends and family. Of course, there are a few aspects of that

issue to be addressed and one may argue that a young boy acts as a role model that a young audience can identify with. However, I would argue that young audience can identify with any protagonist as long as it is well presented and thought through. For example, Shrek in Dreamwork's *Shrek* (2001) is not a young person, nor he is a man or a boy, yet audiences of all ages seem to identify with him and love him.

Most of popular animation's protagonists until the early years of the 21st century are young individuals who never grow old or become disabled. Disney/Pixar's *Finding Nemo* (2003) did portray a young, disabled yet successful protagonist and



Image 9: Superhero tries to be 'normal' in *The Incredibles*. (© 2005, Disney/Pixar)

his relationship with his father. However, that was one of a very few times when popular animation spoke not of a superhero but of a disabled person. Similarly, *The Incredibles* (Disney / Pixar, 2005) portrays

protagonists who are the actual superhero- parents of little superheroes. The film shows how they are coping with the fact that even superheroes can age in both their bodies and their physical abilities, get fed up with their daily jobs and are "normal" by trying to fit social norms. Such outspoken views are still scarce in popular multidimensional animation and still speak of individualism. Indeed, individualism is important even in multidimensional animation, not as a social trend, but as the subjective development of one's unique abilities. *The Incredibles* (Disney/Pixar, 2005) combines the binary approach of having idealistic values (a powerful protagonist saving the world) with the portrayal of a complex protagonist (one with subjective, complex feelings and critical thoughts, reflecting on his own actions).

The multidimensional character strives to solve his individual problems rather than, idealistically, social ones. Other earlier films taking a multidimensional approach, such as the *Batman: The Animated Series* on television (Warner Bros., 1992-1995), also speak of similar issues. Batman appears to fight for social benefits, but in fact does so in order to analyse, reflect and get over his childhood traumas. Batman is often shown to reflect on his parents' murder and to think of revenge for their deaths. Individualism and youth in contemporary popular animation therefore do not represent authority as for example can be seen in *The Incredibles* (Disney/Pixar, 2005), but rather a commercial strategy as young protagonists project their qualities onto viewers. In the film, the children remain under the authority of their parents and are guided throughout the narrative, while occasionally being given the freedom to



Image 10: Batman seeks to resolve his past in *Batman*.
(© 1995, Warner Bros.)

explore and manifest their potential and abilities.

Furthermore, in the age of multidimensional, critical views, the adult figure in popular animation starts to get a growing significance and a life of its own alongside the young protagonist. Thus, for example, the parents of Princess Fiona and the Fairy Godmother in *Shrek 2* (DreamWorks, 2004) have a significant role in the film's

narrative. Nevertheless, as any process of change takes time, adult characters are still often portrayed in popular animation as subjects of criticism by young people. Both the father of Nemo in Disney / Pixar's *Finding Nemo* (2003) and the father of Princess Fiona in *Shrek 2* are portrayed as too worried, limiting and interfering. Criticism of one's elders is a hangover of the "eternal youth culture" in popular animation industry, where being forever young and beautiful has been a legendary eternal wish, as can be seen in films like Hanna-Barbera's *Powerpuff Girls* (1998-2004) and Disney's *Little Mermaid* (1989).

Throughout the 1990s Disney, Hanna-Barbera, Warner Bros. and other companies continued to produce TV series based on young characters while gradually introducing a change as to how a young character was seen. Warner's *Tiny Toon Adventures* (1990-1993), for example, focuses on Looney Tunes characters that show young upstarts how to live and cope in the cartoon world. The youthful protagonists, therefore, have had new limits imposed on their abilities. They are now

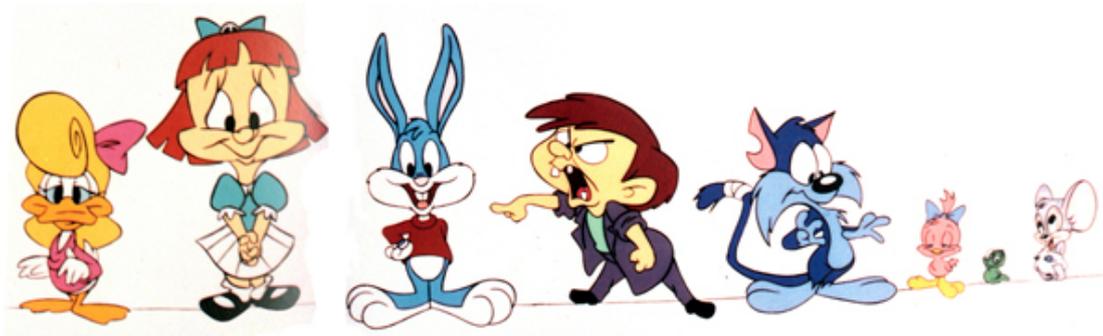


Image 11: Tiny toons need guidance and teaching in *Tiny Toon Adventures*. (© 1993, Warner Bros.)

portrayed as needing someone older to guide them and give them advice. Accordingly, Warner's *Acme Looniversity* and *Acme Acres* have become something like a "Fame" campus for toons. The mischief and the cynicism of Looney Tunes have been inherited by the *Tiny Toon* characters, combined with new qualities of self-reflection by the young protagonists and reflection on the popular animation industry by the older protagonists. Interestingly, despite the emphasis on youthful dreams and perspectives in the films, it is of course adults who are actually creating them and now critically reflecting on them. While adults of the binary age have attempted to create a child-like "unchangeable" world for themselves, their children, i.e., the growing generation, are of the multidimensional age and attracted to an "adult"-like world which emphasizes a process of change, instability and self-reflexiveness. The popular animation industry seems to combine parts of "objective" and "subjective" worlds in which adult viewers can feel that they can learn to handle life situations or emotional events in a simple and humorous way, while younger viewers can learn to nurture their personality as young individuals.

The emergence of critical, self-reflective thought in popular animation narratives and representation has weakened and undermined the previous role of youth in animation films. Binary, youthful protagonists use their physical and mental power to identify their limits, in order to self-identify and to establish themselves more firmly in their area of competence. The process of change has no place in the representation of binary young protagonists in the animation films. Yet in the age of critical self-observation and multidimensional thinking, youth denies having limits, suggesting instead an open-ended process of change and growth (Taylor, 2001: 74). In other words, popular multidimensional animation portrays new type of relationships between appearance and behaviour (or representation) of its characters. In these new relationships, youth as a model of physical power and logical intelligence has shifted to a new stage not yet defined, but one that involves self-criticism and acknowledgements of one's faults.

The same emergence of critical, self-reflective thought in society has given rise to a new perspective on youth and individualism, which is open to processes of change and growth. The popular animation industry continues to use young protagonists as a leading trend but in a commercial and industrial context as a strategy that makes it easier to produce an animation film rather than an ideology. However, the new multidimensional, youthful protagonist also expresses the emergence of differences and individual, unique qualities that are not limited by social and cultural boundaries. Being a part of a multidimensional attitude in popular animation, the myth of the young individual accordingly requires to be seen in a variety of contexts.

The narrative life of the animated, youthful protagonist overflows with emotional, physical and material abundance. This abundance indicates a direct link to the capitalistic attitude in contemporary Western society in which products are fetishized and develop people's self-esteem by fostering their sense of acquisitiveness. Baudrillard (1999: 5-6) explains that as there is growing pressure to individualize consumption, consumption becomes a social event or attains value of a collective nature, such as prestige. Popular animation, being a commercial industry, communicates that idea by weaving the notion of material abundance as a natural outcome of youthfulness and independence into its films. In this way it supplies the

viewers with another contemporary myth, that of money and the idea of abundance per se.

3.3 Capitalism as romantic myth

Popular animation proposes a new approach to money and material abundance by promoting a romantic myth of capitalism, which one might paraphrase as “follow your heart’s desire and fulfil yourself”. Popular animation reworks old perceptions of money by arguing that money comes easily to those who follow their heart’s desire, rather than those who seek to accumulate wealth by hard work. Popular animation films project the notion of money as a value precisely because that is the main interest of popular animation production companies. These companies act in accordance with the power of money in contemporary society, where wealth is often expressed in terms of money. The films clearly project that attitude in their narratives and portray the pursuit of profit as a worthy motivation for any action, as we will see soon. Financial success is seen as a symbol of positive self-evaluation, shown in the popular animation industry’s promotion of protagonists who are financially successful. In addition, the notions of success and abundance are spread throughout other areas of the lives of its characters as well, through the personal relationship they are allowed to have and the social positions they’re shown to occupy.

The contemporary perception of commerce and the abundant flow of material wealth has radically changed from earlier times to the current globalized society. Giddens (2000: 9) explains that the level of world commerce today is much higher not only in the range of opportunities that it offers but also in the way that finance and capital flow, being geared to electronic money and channels of communication. It is easy nowadays to transfer vast amounts of money via the internet, an ability that according to Giddens (2000:9) enables a single individual to “destabilize what might have seemed rock solid economies”, something that is thereby very empowering. Popular contemporary animation being produced by and for that globalized society speaks of a young individual who lives according to these laws of financial flows and material abundance.

The popular animation industry develops in the viewers of its product an awareness of having money and living an enjoyable life of plenty and an abundant flow of wealth. The old-fashioned idea that one needs to toil in factories or on farms for money (and then feel guilty if having more than someone else) does not necessarily work in a globalized society. In that society people can make a fortune by sitting in front of a computer and using their intelligence rather than their hands. Mental labour does not make the achieving of wealth an easy job as it also requires effort, but not in the sense of a hard, sweaty life style that may shorten one's life. Instead, globalized society emphasizes mental efforts and the use of intellectual capacities to achieve a constant, abundant flow of wealth.



Image 12: Following one's dreams generates the income in *Scooby Doo and The Alien Invasion*. (© 2000, Warner Bros. and Hanna-Barbera)

As a result popular contemporary animation films do not show hard work and physical and mental suffering. For example, films often start and finish with a character's leisure time. We never see Batman in *Batman: The Animated Series* (Warner Bros., 1992-1995), for example, working in his factory, or Teenage Ninja Turtles in the *Teenage Ninja Turtles* series (Warner Bros., 1987-1995) going to school. In the *Scooby Doo* TV series, in the film *Scooby Doo and the Alien Invasion* (Hanna-Barbera and Warner Bros., 2000) Scooby and the gang do not work but rather move from place to place in search

of adventure and satisfaction from their pursuits. While investigating different and unusual events, Scooby and the gang explore their mental and physical abilities to their best and apply their skills to what they like doing best – detecting crimes and helping others. The film shows that profit and success come when one follows one's heart and talents. Other animation films show a similar attitude and often do not represent the actual process of working as the main means of earning money.

The popular animation industry further establishes the idea of profit both financially and mentally not only in its narratives but also in the actual functioning of the industry as a whole. To increase profits and the creation of wealth in and for the popular animation industry, animation filmmakers started by increasing production costs, which in turn became a gimmick that served to promote their films. The more money is put into a production, the better the general public regards the film. For example, Mitchell (2002) claims that DreamWorks spent \$45 million marketing *Chicken Run* (2000), which was more than its production budget, and that Disney/Pixar spent \$115 million on *Monsters, Inc.* (2001), with the film making \$523 million at the box office world-wide. The next stage in animation filmmakers' attempts to increase profits was to produce the same number of films using fewer people in its production and on smaller budgets. Such methods are becoming more and more possible now with the help of advanced technology. The marketing in popular animation is therefore done through an idea rather than people, a method which is different from live-action films in which stardom and film directors or in other words people, are still very significant. Large popular animation companies, such as Disney, are responsible to their stockholders to produce profits, which are then reinvested in the business (Wasko, 2001: 29) to further increase profits.



Image 13: Search and accumulation of wealth in *Duck Tales*. (© 1990, Disney)

Although popular animation films by other companies clearly project a “profit motive” in their narratives as well, Disney films often openly speak of the pursuit of profit, the flow of money and a general abundance of material possessions. For example, Uncle Scrooge in the Disney series *Duck Tales* (Disney, 1988-1990), is one of the main protagonists in Disney films that is openly and clearly motivated by the pursuit of profit. He accumulates

money through his life’s adventures. Dorfman and Mattelart (1984: 20) see Walt

Disney in his own characters, such as Uncle Scrooge. They (1984: 16) argue that Disney wanted to show the viewers that not only is it possible to have money and be happy, but he also wanted to share his talent for fun and for making others happy.

Other animation companies may not be that open about their interest in producing wealth, but they do share a vision of money and material abundance as a subject that is worth sacrifices and the overcoming of obstacles. For example, in the

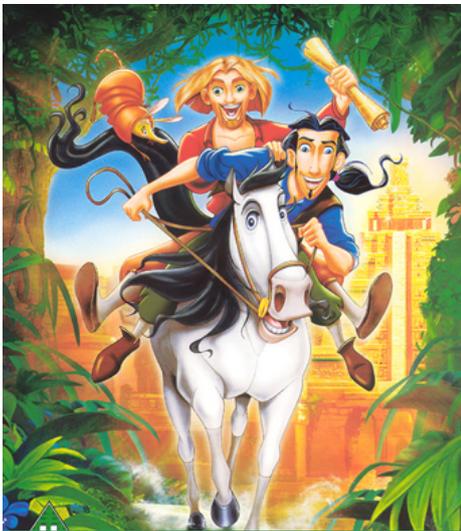


Image 14: Search for wealth in *The Road to El Dorado*. (© 2000, Dreamwork)

DreamWorks film *The Road to El Dorado* (DreamWorks, 2000) Miguel and Tulio are ready to explore wild forests in an unknown country of the New World in order to follow the map to the lost city of gold, El Dorado. Later on, after the natives had mistaken them for Gods from their prophecies, they plan to take as much gold back to Spain as they can without considering the implications for the local community. Their accomplice, a young local girl, is also ready to sacrifice her life in the pursuit of gold. She happily leaves her city to join her Spanish friends in their quest for gold in other

places. The friends see their financial successes as an integral part of their adventures in life, which in turn raises their self-esteem. Financial success is therefore seen as a symbol of self-evaluation.

Mutant films such as, for example, the *Batman: The Animated Series* TV series (Warner Bros., 1992-1995), portray a search for profit, and generally a positive approach to business, as a beneficial aim to do good. For instance, Batman's missions to save the people of Gotham City run alongside his business as an owner of factories. Batman is an important business and political figure in his city. As a night guard of the city, he gets up-to-date information about the people in the city,

which helps him with his business as well. Other characters in animation, such as Mickey, Droopy and Bugs Bunny, own yachts, convertible cars and houses, and never encounter financial problems.

In the popular animation industry, consumption is what motivates people to strive for financial profits, and for money in general, and this is mirrored in animation films, whose protagonists are equally motivated. The popular animation industry emphasizes an approach towards money which appraises it as a reward, thereby supporting the romantic aspects of capitalism. Baudrillard's (1999: 15) argument that consumption is a system of ideological values is in fact closely related to how the popular animation industry weaves its approach to commercialism and capitalism into its narratives, thus projecting the ideology of capitalism through them.

3.3 Summary

An unconventional physiology in popular animation films reflects a contemporary attitude towards a commodified body whose natural processes are disregarded. This commodification of the body, making it thereby an object for our observation, shows it to be a commercial strategy that generates dreams of youth and liberty. While it is commercially and industrially convenient to create protagonists in animation films that are youthful, the new multidimensional approach to youth and individualism raises issues for a critical observation of social and cultural limits. An analysis of these may lead to an open-ended process of change and growth, which is a part of the commercial, capitalistic approach followed by the popular animation industry. This approach, in turn, reworks traditional perceptions of money by supporting the contemporary "unstable" electronic flows of money, where money can follow one's heart's desire at the click of the mouse, something much more easily achieved than gaining money by hard physical work.

This chapter has identified new myths in popular animation as part of its adaptation to contemporary multidimensional society. It shows how popular animation has been developing within its previous framework of commercialism while becoming more and more complex in its narratives and the ideological

projections that lie behind its images. That in turn raises another question, namely, how the popular animation industry uses its observations of the laws of nature to create its representations. The next chapter will observe how some aspects of popular animation's use of physics are bent to its commercial and industrial strategies.

Chapter 4:

Laws of Physics and the Unnaturalistic & Enchanting Nature of Popular Animation Images

The core argument of this chapter is that the formal characteristics of shape and colour and laws of physics as employed in popular animation are of much more complex value than were assigned to them previously in the age of binary popular animation. The imagery used in and the general appearance of popular animation not only provide a platform for profound messages, but popular animation also has an autonomous language that is meaningful and symbolic, which expresses its meaning through movement, colour, shape and line. Observing a few of these aspects of popular animation's physicalities helps to understand the meanings they carry in popular animation films. Of course, nothing man-made can be isolated from the ideological influences exerted on the processes of its creation. Therefore observing the external and the physical as it appears in popular animation imagery may serve to illuminate the myths of which I have spoken above.

Animation explores the natural by expanding perception and experimenting with the forms and qualities of the natural appearance of things. To understand better these experiments in popular animation, Section 4.1 discusses the formal characteristics employed in popular animation as a creative interpretation of the natural, of reality. Section 4.2 links that interpretation with the commercial approach of the popular animation industry, in which the observed qualities of things are exploited as stimuli to increase the commercial impact inherent in both the appearance and the physical capabilities of popular animated characters.

4.1 Creative industrial and commercial interpretation of natural reality in popular animation images

From its beginning popular animation has concentrated on the observation and reproduction of movement as perceived in actual reality. Since viewers are not familiar with the nuances of movement in detail, popular animated images are

presumed to be a product of the imagination. Similarly, when Muybridge's work was published, most often in the form of line drawings based on his photographs, it was criticised by those who thought that horse's legs could never assume such unlikely positions (Brown, 1957:67). Yet, both Muybridge's observations and animation's ones are taken from a naturalistic environment. However, as opposed to Muybridge, whose aim was only to observe the environment, not exploit it for commercial gain, popular animation operates within a commercial framework. Due to a shortage of time and money, popular animation has produced a limited style that uses fragmented imagery and movement. Such limited animation uses social conventions to fill visual gaps in the movement portrayed on film. Use of visually expressed social conventions, through a particular style of movement, image and sound, thus creates a language in animation that, in turn, positions the popular animated image not simply as a visual pattern but as a mental experience in which shapes are commercially and industrially subordinated to a fixed perceptual system.

4.1.1 Animated laws of shape & movement and naturalistic reality

In popular animation, the relationships between objects abide slightly different laws of physics than the natural laws formulated by science, despite both types being derived from observation of the natural environment. An animator perceives the laws of physics and then exaggerates and enlarges the appearance of things until they become visible in "enchanted" proportions unfamiliar from everyday life.

Although popular animation appears not to be subject to natural forces, the knowledge which allows the animator to manipulate laws of shape, colour and movement is derived from nature, from physical reality. One may conclude that popular animation is an experimental laboratory for the perception and application of natural physics. But because it is so experimental, films are perceived as having no apparent "physical connection" to reality. Some animators do not see that connection. They see the external presentation of what appears to be funny and surreal. For example, Kanfer (1997: 118-119), who is an animator himself, notes that popular animated characters may be portrayed as running faster than bullets, and may be stretched and contracted beyond their natural limits. His observation points

to certain animational laws of physics that enable even an un-elasticized object to stretch as if rubber. Singer (2001) accordingly notes that “normal physics” in



Image 15: Elasticity of the body in *Tom and Jerry Kids*. (© 1993, Hanna Barbera)

popular animation can be stated in terms of squashing and stretching and other fluid movements. Therefore, when one is being hit, the energy of inertia can duplicate one’s organs and movements, or temporarily change one into the shape of the object that hit one’s body. For example, when Tom the Kid in the episode *Bat*

Mouse of the TV series *Tom and Jerry Kids* (Hanna-Barbera, 1990-1993) is hit by a ball, his body changes into the shape of a ball.

In his book *Serious business: the art and commerce of animation in America from Betty Boop to Toy Story*, Kanfer does not recognise a direct connection between popular animation and everyday reality, and nor does Singer. However, despite appearing surreal and abnormal, the observations expressed in the laws of popular animation’s physics are based on actual physical analysis of and reflection on bodily reaction after being hit, or indeed of any other action. The body, in actuality, will vibrate and become suspended in that contorted form for some time until it returns to its previous self. A similar phenomenon takes place even when one walks or jumps. One’s organs, if observed in very slow motion that also registers the body’s progress and movement in space, will undergo a process of change and restructuring each time anew. As frames in an animation film



Image 16: Absurd fun in *Looney Tunes*. (© 1994, Warner Bros.)

follow one another at a certain speed, the suspense created between frames, i.e., in the narrative, enables the viewer to acknowledge the changes that take place, which is what popular animation exaggerates or “enlarges”.

Popular animation’s images seem absurd, funny and unreal. However, one needs also to be aware that popular animation is positioned in a commercial and industrial framework. That fact leads the animation industry to exaggerate things that already seem absurd and surreal further in order to make them even funnier. Adamson (1975: 48) observes that exaggerated irrationality makes people laugh, noting (1975: 190) that violent dislocation of bodily parts, being broken into fragments after getting hit, or distortion of forms by pulling one form into another (e.g., when the head of a character falls into its stomach) were driven by the desire to make people laugh at something one cannot do in reality. To perform such distortions, the animated organs

are not connected by flesh and blood, as they normally would be. The same applies to component parts of objects. In such a way, they may easily break apart, evaporate, and



Image 17: Distortion and exaggeration of the body in *Little Red Riding Hood*. (© 1962, Warner Bros.)

reconstruct anew, sometimes in new, unconventional locations, such as a leg instead of a head, as seen in *I am Weasel* (Hanna-Barbera, 1997-1999). There is no blood or pain when tearing off an organ. In Disney/Pixar’s *Toy Story* (1995), the toys continue to live even when they are actually made of a combination of a toy’s head and scissors. The animated bodies may be very elastic but as they are made of animation’s materiality, they may sometimes also be portrayed as having bones that are unbreakable, and sometimes as having bones that may shatter into small pieces like glass. Although it seems that there is no consistency in this then, consistency is in fact created by an inner logic that either follows the purposeful statement of an

animator to play on people's perceptions or that exaggerates the details of actual naturalness.



Image 18: Limited movement in *The Road Runner*. (© 1994, Warner Bros.)

These gags and visual irrationality are very characteristic of binary popular animation, where animators used irrationality to make a personal statement in addition to the ideological one made in the animation's narrative. The irrationality was further supported by the production of a limited animation's style that does not demand realism or fully drawn movement. Leslie (2002: 214) notes its flat, primitive-like

style was easy to create, and therefore was more convenient for commercial purposes. In limited animation, artists work with standardized formulae, so they can move freely between characters and studios. Such limited animation was the leading technique in the popular animation sector and is still the most convenient technique in popular animation. However, the dominance of that approach has shifted since the mid-1990s with the introduction of CGI into common use in every animation studio. CGI enables the animator to create easily a continuous, flowing movement, and complex appearance and textures on a computer. With more complex appearance, the level of the meaning that is represented in popular animation films has also risen. For example, rather than showing that a character (in limited animation) has simply moved from one side of a screen to another to portray change of location on an almost symbolic level, the CGI or the multidimensional animation enable to create a movement which is characteristic of a particular character that moves in a certain unique way that also carries with it the character's intentions such as stealing into a certain place, or storming in and etc.

4.1.2 Animation images a mental experience with complexity of meaning

Popular animation is a system of visual and narrative representation that has adapted itself to the commercial and socio-cultural networks within which it is situated. It reflects on these networks by acquiring information and identifying patterns about its environment, and by critically analysing the whole adaptive process by means of its materiality and imagery. The way popular animation compresses, simplifies and reconstructs the observed events shows popular animation to be a complex system.

In *Images and Understanding*, Barlow (1990: 21) examines the perception of images by the human brain. He argues that image perception involves both physical and mental abilities to understand what is seen. That means that the brain informs the individual about “what is there” (green, soggy) and “what it means” (Popeye’s spinach). Therefore, Monaco (2000: 155) concludes, image is not just a visual pattern but a mental ideological ‘experience’ at the same time. While one can decide to close one’s eyes, one cannot close one’s ears, which hear every sound within hearing range. That is to say, one can choose not to look. Thus, to see is to choose to see. During the experience of watching popular animation two analogous and opposing processes occur. On the one hand, the popular animation industry leaves its



Image 19: Complexity of meanings in *Spirit, the Stallion of the Cimarron*. (© 2002, Dreamwork)

films on a level of the pleasurable leisure product that does not require deep analysis. On the other hand, it conveys social and ideological meanings in its narratives and what it chooses to represent. The co-existence of two different processes taking concurrently makes the observation of popular animation’s films a complex

experience in which one process is perceived consciously (the entertainment) and the

other is less or even unconsciously (the ideology). For example, in *Spirit – The Stallion of the Cimaron* (DreamWorks, 2002), the characters can be recognized as carrying several meanings. The film discusses various types of social relationships that are characterized by class, gender and family. These meanings suggest an understanding on a national political level as well. The use of horses as protagonists also raises the matter of territorialism and of maintaining the territorial borders and of group identity.



Image 20: Limited movement in *Dastardly and Muttley*. (© “Stop that pigeon”, Hanna-Barbera, 1997)



Image 21: Limited movement in *Dastardly and Muttley*. (© Hanna-Barbera, 1991)

Therefore, acknowledging popular animation film as bearing ideological statements requires analysis of its narratives. However, the complexity in animation film is not limited to the narrative levels of which I have spoken more broadly in Chapters Two and Three, but it also touches the notion of perceptual complexity that emerges from the lack of processes depicted in limited popular animation. For instance, fast-running motion in limited animation would be depicted not as a process, but as frozen drawings of duplicated contour lines at different stages of running, which are drawn in a circle around the image of a figure’s limbs. Such an image projects a single moment frozen in one frame, rather than an unfolding process of physical activity from its beginning to the end. The process is squeezed into one

frame that describes speed, while the movement is reduced to an iconic, fragmented appearance due to commercial and industrial demands. Such animation does not project time but space-location only, in which activities are compressed into a mere instant, a ready-made conventional icon. These animated, compressed icons draw on

visual conventions, i.e., socially agreed, representative forms of behaviour and appearance. These conventions, along with a particular style in movements and patterns of images, sounds and behaviours, create a whole system of visual language in popular animation.

The visual language in popular animation is a complex system of meanings and expressions that requires analysis and understanding, whereas according to Monaco (2000: 157), the viewer's physical ability to see an image persuades them that they can also understand it. However, one also needs to understand symbols, colour and even location behind the image as I discuss more in details in Part Two of the thesis.

4.1.3 Animated shapes industrially and commercially shaped to conform to a fixed perceptual system

Instinctively, an image is initially perceived as a shape or form. Piper (2001: 113) argues that relationships between forms are fixed psychological-physiological data that are planted in the visual perception system of the viewer. Hence, appearance in popular animation can be generalised as a concentration of forms in space that have a psychological impact on the viewer. Piper (2001: 108) gives as the example of a direct physical connection between mass, shape and weight the filling of a container, since that produces a shape which has mass and weight. It is only natural that forms are very appealing for creating a particular physical appearance in animation, as it is a reasonable way of understanding the physical world that we live in. Popular animation industry examines many physical, perceptual events by simply observing them being actualised on the screen. Learning about everyday reality and human perception in popular animation is therefore intensified through the adaptation of theory to practice and the observation of results.

In popular animation, shapes are presented to conform to a fixed perceptual system. Hence a particular arrangement of forms brings relaxation, while another arrangement may stir anxiety and tension (Zakia, 2002: 52). Popular animation uses

that fixed perceptual system to balance the emotional input of a film. For example, a particular array of forms in the *Powerpuff Girls* series (Hanna-Barbera, 1998-2004) brings relaxation, namely, when the girls fly together silently in a long horizontal, straight row. A different array, on the other hand, for example, an elephant standing



Image 22: Composition may increase anxiety in the narrative in *Ice Age*. (© 2002, 20th Century Fox)

in a large diagonal shape from the upper right part of the frame down towards a small weasel in the *Ice Age* (20th Century Fox, 2002), intuitively arouses anxiety and stress. Although the relationship between forms is pure mathematics, it acts

emotionally on the viewer. Strong contrasting colours, quick movements and asymmetric shapes aim to catch the viewer's attention as contrasting colours naturally evoke interest in them, and it is an instinctive drive in humans to follow quick, sharp movements (Piper, 2001: 112, Vol. 1). Animators are aware of these human qualities and employ a visual style of sharp movements, contrasting colours and asymmetric shapes to adapt appearances so as to facilitate a faster production process and to increase the attraction for the viewer even more. Commercial demands have led popular animation to exaggerate the importance of these appearances. That is why Thomas (1991: 28) explains that Disney's "Mickey Mouse...is actually a concentration of round shapes, which is easy to reproduce in the animation industry." Something similar happened in other studios, as shown by *Animaniacs* (Warner Bros., 1993-1998) and *The Powerpuff Girls* (Hanna-Barbera, 1998-2004) for example, as illustrated more in detail in chapter 5. The characters are based on round shapes because they are easier and faster to draw, and this produces a uniformity of style. Gradually characters became rounded with large heads, big eyes

and short arms like babies (Bendazzi, 1994: 70). Such dynamics are stressed by a particular binary graphic style, in which the contour line has large significance in separating characters and objects from their background. Line, colour, shape and movement have become the visual language of popular animation.

Popular animation constantly adjusts the meanings behind its imagery in relation to its commercial context. Each experience a person undergoes in everyday life alters the context in which he or she applies his or her judgement. Hence as an animator, I am aware of the mutable and fluid position of the audience towards the animation film, and this is why popular animation continually changes and adapts its system of representation to its social, cultural, commercial and purely visual contexts. Therefore, its representations and their appearance change and evolve accordingly. Since both the nature of the viewer and the social-cultural structure of popular animation have developed interactively in a process of co-evolution, together they have formed popular animation as an adaptive system.

Seeing how even the simplest observation of walking in popular animation is adjusted to commercial demands, we can appreciate that watching an image is not enough to understand it. By analogy, there is a difference between reading and understanding literature. In order to understand literature one needs to study rhythms, styles and examples of the same (and also of related) literary genres. Accordingly, the images of popular animation, i.e., symbols, colour and even location, need to be “read” as an additional text that has the ability to activate several senses at once (Piper, 2001: 115) and that acts emotionally on the viewer.

4.2 Observed natural qualities exploited as commercial stimuli and attraction

As discussed above, popular animated images often appear to be imaginative and unreal, which enables the commercial exploitation of popular animated images to pass unnoticed. Animators use the unusual appearance of animation images like a visual gag to attract the viewer. However, these gags also help animators to facilitate the industrial production of animation characters. The popular animation industry makes extensive use of gags, to the point that there are almost no films without

them. Contemporary popular animation uses technological advances and effects to create gags in the structuring of its characters and narratives.

Despite the simplicity of appearance employed in animation film, the popular animation industry succeeds in creating a psychological sense of life that flows from its graphic visuals. In order to communicate vitality of characters through the appearances of animated graphics, animators use a simplistic style so as to achieve a universal understanding of animated messages. Hollinshead (1998: 87) accordingly notes that animated images must be simple and clear in order to gain wide attention during a film's distribution across the globe. Furniss (1999: 149) asserts that simple, flat and caricaturistic animation figures are drawn so that they will not look overly realistic and therefore will not prompt a critical evaluation of what is seen. Instead, as part of a commercial strategy it is hoped that the audience will accept images and narratives as fictional, which will then enable an even wider distribution because they would then appear as both non-ethnic specific and very generalizable.

Popular binary animation has been concentrated on the production of simple graphic iconic images, which involve less manufacturing effort in the filmmaking process. Simple and endlessly repeated narratives have created the opportunity to manufacture an endless number of films. Simplicity was encouraged by budget limits, and as a result, Adams (1991: 89) asserts, animators have started to use gimmicks and produced limited, simple animation films. In these films, animators have used fewer and more simplified characters and body movements.

Furniss (1999: 151) argues that contemporary popular animation films create the notion of simplicity as well, not just because of budget and time limitations but as an adjustment to the flatness and simplicity of everyday life. These formal characteristics express character's



Image 23: eyes represent life in *Pokemon*. (© 1998, Warner Bros.)

liveliness in a basic, simple form through the depiction of the character's eyes.

Brophy (1997: 27) analyses how popular animation simplifies complex natural and psychological phenomena, reducing them to an iconic symbolism. He speaks of the way a character's gaze is portrayed in animation films. Although Brophy (1997) analyses mainly Japanese popular animation, his analysis is still significant for my research since American popular animation has adopted similar techniques and the Japanese and American popular animation industries are actually interrelated and affect each other in the global world of filmmaking. In sighted people's everyday experience, being alive is perceived through their eyes. Understanding this, popular animation dramatically enlarges the eyes of its characters to communicate the sense of being alive. Brophy (1997: 27) argues that an interpretation of a deep communicative gaze is created when the eye does not move, since then it appears that the eye rotates. He argues that "eyes suggest movement as they reflect kinetic and dynamic light changes in the surrounding environment". Accordingly, meanings are often communicated in popular animation films by presenting its characters with a fixed gaze as for example can be seen in *Pokemon* (Warner Bros., 1998). Brophy (1997: 27) asserts that a character's eye movement therefore portrays the comprehension by its mind. "The depiction of cartoon eyes is then based less on verisimilitude and more on pure motion mechanics. Thus cartoon eyes connote life not by appearing life-like in manner, but by simultaneously evoking the emergence of conscious movement (the gaze) and the withdrawal of physical movement (the dead gaze)". Paradoxically, Brophy (1997: 28) argues, animation figures are drawn whereas the sound in animation films is human, real, recorded, thus creating a lack of balance. The mouth movement is usually simple, especially in limited popular animation, from left to right and to the centre. The simplicity of movement emphasises the eye with its flickering as a centre, and the source of sound. Brophy (1997: 32) explains that small vibrations in the white part of the eyes, which seem to reflect the returning light, create a sense of life-like characters. However, Brophy (1997: 33) notes that the eye in animation has become a camera, a breathless, glossy organ that reflects what is in front of it and not an inner life. It is interesting that despite its wider possibilities, contemporary popular animation, which uses computer-generated imagery and textures, also still uses the technique of the fixed

gaze and blinking to portray life. However, a few changes have been introduced to contemporary, computerised popular imagery, resulting in an increased complexity in its textures and appearances, while otherwise still using simplicity in the movements and expressions of its characters. Simplicity and complexity seem to be interwoven in a new way in computer-generated films.

Popular animation's tendency to simplify complex ideas and phenomena through its use of simple, memorable shapes and colours, which can then function as symbols, has the aim of directing the viewer's attention. In addition, the simplicity of the symbols employed aims to make it easy for viewers to identify the protagonists and follow the narrative, which is not only convenient for a commercial medium but also indicates that the foundation of animation's reality is in fact simplicity itself (Taylor, 2001: 137). The popular animation industry portrays everyday reality in a simple way while analysing and reflecting on that reality.

The emphasis on visual effects, on the one hand, simplifies the contents of complex narrative events to "enchanted" appearances that dislocate the sense of the realistic in popular animation imagery. On the other hand, animation's simplicity is used as a commercial strategy to manufacture a large number of simple and universally understood films. However, no matter how simplified popular animation's images are, Wiseman and Groves (1997: 127) argue, they are always "simplified" miniature translations of reality.

4.3 Summary

The popular animation industry takes its inspiration for the physical qualities portrayed on screen from the natural environment. Yet being a commercial framework for the production of entertainment requires the stylistic adaptation of these physical qualities to visual iconic conventions due to a shortage of time and budgetary constraints. Every formal characteristic therefore can be understood on two levels, those of its commercial stylisation and of its reflection on and of the natural environment. The commercial aspect is often expressed in popular animation through the notion of simplicity, whereas the growing graphical capabilities of

computers help the animation industry to increase the complexity of its textures. By gradually shifting its attention from observing the natural laws of physics to complexity and subtlety in the nature of its materiality, popular multidimensional animation expands and evolves within the framework of a commercial and industrial medium. The following chapter will observe how popular animation introduces its myths and commercial ideology.

Chapter 5:

The Formal Characteristics and their Commercial Function

Every single element in an animation frame is made by an animator after investing hours of thought and work in it. Clearly, such a creative work acts as a signature of the artist bearing certain beliefs and opinions, which will in one way or another find an imprint on the formal characteristics in the film. Even when a film is made as part of industrial and commercial approach, there is a clear signature of the country and culture that have produced it. At the same time, our contemporary way of life, supplied with technological advantage earlier animators did not have, affects the way animators think and present their messages.

We have seen in earlier chapters how the popular animation industry is positioned in a commercial framework, which has it supporting a capitalist ideology in its narratives. This chapter intends to show how the production techniques of popular animation, which are part of a commercial-industrial system, help to portray its myths and ideological discourses through formal characteristics rather than narratives. I have divided the formal characteristics of popular animation into their components, such as colour, texture and their arrangement in a frame, in order to increase our understanding of how these units operate within a film. Section 5.1 therefore discusses the meanings behind the composition of lines, shapes, colour and texture. This section also discusses various notions of space that exist between lines and shapes and within colour and texture that most viewers are not aware of.

Understanding these details and their arrangement declares the animator's intentions. Various arrangements of colour and shape can help to focus the viewer's attention on different points in the visual narrative and therefore visually affect the communicated message. Since the arrangement and the use of formal characteristics have become increasingly affected by the growing use of computer technology, Section 5.2 relates to the impact of the contemporary use of technology on both representation and appearance in popular animation. Paradoxically, despite being

spectacular, the constant technological complexity in animation films raises the critical awareness of the viewer while still manipulating the visuals on account of its commercial context. The popular animation industry uses its knowledge of the psychological manipulation of sight and formal characteristics in its imagery for commercial and industrial purposes. Understanding how that commercial technique was developed and adjusted to the psychological needs of an audience shows how popular animation employs this technique as its marketing strategy.

5.1 Meaning behind compounding units of animation frame

Popular animated images are mainly structured from lines, which create a feeling of movement in a frame due to psychological aspects of perception. Animators project their familiarity with the dynamics of gravity on every line in an image, and therefore some lines seem to appear balanced and others dynamic (Zakia, 2002: 172-173). Even the simplest line in popular animation has a meaning, not to mention a whole arrangement of objects. The fact that an animator has thought about these issues and decided to position a certain object in a particular place is a declaration of the animator's thoughts and intentions. The arrangement in the frame is not only significant to a narrative but also to a motion, location of which determines its own narrative alongside the verbal one. Every arrangement or composition is a storytelling arrangement that unfolds within a certain space, while providing an additional interpretation of a narrative that gives popular animation films even more depth of content.

5.1.1 Composition of lines and shapes declares animator's intentions

Shapes in popular animation are made mainly of structures of lines and have a significant role in the creation of the atmosphere of the whole arrangement in a film's frame. Animators aim for the viewer to be always exposed to psychological parameters that are part of human visual perception, which are directed and manipulated to produce a certain visual and emotional effect. For example, popular industrial animation studios have chosen to work with mostly rounded shapes, as

mentioned in Chapter 4. Round shapes are not only applied to the characters in a film, but to other objects in a frame as well. Piper (2001: 113) asserts that the round shape is the only form that has “positive” constant energy in relation to the background because it harmoniously expands and spreads into all directions. The use of round shapes, for example, clearly states the animator’s approach in the arrangement of those shapes.

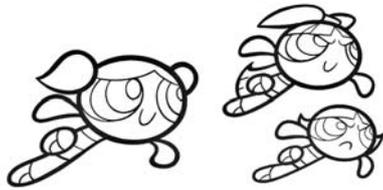
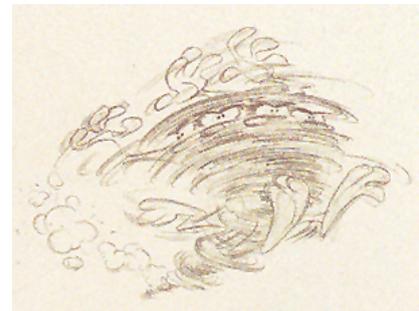


Image 24: Use of rounded shapes in *Powerpuff Girls*. (© 1998, Hanna Barbera)

The representation of animator’s intentions and the narrative statement made in popular animational shapes seem to flow from their arrangement. For example, analogously to a story that is developed mostly horizontally (visually) and linearly (narratively) from the beginning to the end, animators work with movement that creates a certain narrative by being positioned usually from one side of a frame to another. In this way a panoramic composition is created that acts as a type of storytelling. The story unfolds with the composition. However, as opposed to a painting where there is only one frame, in animation there is a sequence of frames that together create the film. The popular animation industry has adopted some of the structures of storytelling in the frame from the cinema and some from the paintings and drawings of classical art, while also questioning and adjusting them to its own messages. Hence, animated characters can enter the frame from different



Images 25, 26: visual whirlpool creates emotional connection between the frames in *The Tasmanian Devil*. (© 2004, Warner Bros.)

directions each time they enter, or exit the frame only to reappear in a new frame in an unexpected location. In Warner Bros.' *Duck Amuck* (1993), Duffy Duck can appear out of the blue in a new frame with no apparent logical connection to a previous frame. The connection that binds the animational narrative together is therefore emotional, and scenery may contain many diagonal compositions that create a feeling of disorientation and dynamics in the film. For example, in the episode *The Tazmanian Devil* in the *Looney Tunes* series (Warner Bros., 1941-2004), the arrangement of lines and shapes within a frame at times produces a visual whirlpool of movement and objects each time the Devil is moving somewhere.

Such a dynamic, emotional approach to arranging objects within a frame reveals a special attitude towards space, which is used in popular animation to communicate a narrative message. Space becomes materialised and is not void of characteristics. Space itself becomes a character that extends the experience of perceiving a structure and the arrangement of objects in popular animation. The manipulation and distortion of such space constantly reminds the viewer of its existence, its qualities

and limits as an animated object.

For example, in Warner Bros.' *The Road Runner* (1949-2000) series,

space is sometimes used as a conventional "air" space, and

sometimes it becomes a solid material upon which the character is smashed and squashed. Popular animators thus experiment with

the laws of perspective that they are accustomed to and the natural

laws of physics. At times,



Image 27: experimenting with space in *The Road Runner*. (© 2000, Warner Bros.)

animators only change the size of an object in order to show a change in distance. Based on our visual experience, what appears to be big on the screen is automatically translated as being closer. Therefore, depth in popular animation, for example, is not an actual physical experience but a mental projection by the viewer

based on their memory of the (property of) perspective associated with an idea or concept only. Such observation of the popular animational frame may lead the viewer to define the limits and forms of substance as well as the thoughts behind their arrangement and thus provides a platform for critical analysis of multidimensional popular animation.

The popular animational arrangement of forms is a structure of signs, which initiates a network of meanings that simultaneously provoke and elude reflection on reality and concentrate on the subjective perception of that reality. The following section discusses the element of colour, which is a fundamental unit of popular animation films. Just like the arrangement of shapes in animation films, colour is used to provoke a psychological reaction in the viewer, which will eventually have an effect on the profits made from the films.

5.1.2 Colour and texture focus attention, lead idea and provide sense of continuity

Animators use the natural ability of the brain to compensate for gaps in visual perception, while using colour to focus the viewer's attention, lead the idea and provide a sense of continuity in an animation sequence. Colour as a visual element has aspects that involve aesthetic and psychological responses and even physical and emotional sensations. The popular animation industry clearly employs its knowledge of some of those influences on the human psyche for its commercial purposes.

According to Leslie (2002: 253), colour in animation is used as a tool with which the eye transfers information about the perceived image. The imagery of binary popular animation used mainly flat, unnaturalistic colours to fill clearly defined contours of objects in a frame. This type of colours that depict very bland flat mechanic hues as opposed to hand made oil painting colour or water colour, I call 'graphic' colours. Graphic colour is mainly linked with reproduction methods. These colours were aimed to project symbolic meanings, rather than constituting an observation of reality. Piper (2001: 124) argues that such colour within a graphic contour line not only enriched the image, but also created space, volume, movement,



Images 28, 29: contrast shapes and symbolic colours in *Tom and Jerry*. (© 1996, "the Cat concerto", Hanna Barbera)

moods and emotions. As the principal dimensions of colour are its purity, brightness and warmth in relation to other colours, the nature of bright warm colours is that they appear to be moving forward, whereas cold and dark colours tend to regress (Piper, 2001:127, Vol. 1). This visual movement created by colour also creates a sense of depth. However, binary animators often used bland, smooth, simple, graphic colour that does not create depth. Instead, Furniss (1999: 149) notes, popular animation films that use such pallets of colour also give their characters and their backgrounds many details so that the viewer's eye cannot

rest on a particular fragment because of the intensity of the palette. The eye "jumps" from one dominant colour to another, whereas the colours seem to be more vivid than the objects in the frame. In that situation it maybe difficult for the viewer not only to critically analyse what is seen but even simply to see the narrative flow. However, flat, graphically coloured forms without texture had a role of their own, helping to increase the fast, commercial communication of messages as there was no need to stop and analyse details and textures of what was perceived. It was also industrially more convenient to produce such colours as artists were often manually colouring the animated cells. And it is very difficult to create manually the same unchanging shade of, for example, "pink" to paint, let's say, 6,000 drawn



Image 30: complex naturalistic computerized textures in *Ice Age*. (© 2002, 20th Century Fox)

cells. It is much easier to use a ready, graphic, simple, basic colour such as red, blue, black and yellow.

Gradually, with the introduction of advanced technology, popular animation was able to introduce complexity and texture into its colours. A wider range of colour pallet introduces a direct connection with light and darkness, which in turn creates its hues. Lighter and darker areas within a frame help to create the overall composition of each shot and thus guide the viewer's attention to certain objects and actions as well as

create a sense of depth. On the one hand, it seems that a more complex pallet of colour has made the popular animational image appear to be more “realistic” in the sensory, perceptual sense. On the other hand, colour used in a film, whether computer-generated or hand-made, is still a symbol of “objective” reality and not the reality itself. It may be that when “realistic” colours and textures were initially introduced, they looked like they were somehow “objective” and real, but actually they are not timeless or unchanging and at some point will be seen again as a symbol, in a context that is not realistic. This perspective on the formal characteristics of popular animation, seeing it as a time- and context-related medium, positions it as a critical art form. The criticism of the popular animation industry becomes more sophisticated with the introduction of a wide range of computer-generated colour pallets. Computer software such as Photoshop, Cartoon Television Program, Maya and other similar ones used in contemporary animation films enable

the animator to create soft shadows and control “light spots” as in live-cinema settings. Therefore a softer, non-graphic approach is available as can be seen, for instance, in *Sinbad – The Legend of the Seven Seas* (2003) by DreamWorks. When the pirate ships are under full sail, the complex and intriguing play of lights and shadows on the water create the most realistic effect, mixed with animated expression and textures, where even the water becomes an organic, live creature. Elements such as colour and texture can help give flat, graphic, commercial images a visual richness that cannot be touched but only watched, and lead the viewer to identify sensory input with narratives and messages in a film.

Colour combined with texture help the viewer to evoke the memory of other experiences, including sensory ones, that cause a particular image to appear real even when the viewer sees it as an image. Piper (2001: 118) explains that, “the viewer’s strong response to textures is connected to the link



Image 31: texture links between a sense of sight and a sense of touch in *Shrek 2*. (© 2004, Dreamwork).

between the sense of sight and the sense of touch. The roughness of the tree or the smoothness of the glass are absorbed into the mind ... Therefore a particular touchable memory is developed that causes the particular textures to appear real” . Texture in popular animation has come to convey a visual sense of vitality and realism that causes the viewer’s eye to stop in the midst of its visual “surf” and critically analyse what is seen in the frame. Piper (2001: 119) argues that computerised non-linear depiction slows down the viewer’s analysis of an image as it takes more time to understand the dimensionality and context of such shapes, colours and textures in relation to their presentation. Binary style commercial sharp

lines and flat non-textural colours, on the contrary, make image perception much easier and quicker.

Colour has the ability to impact psychologically and sensorally on the viewer. However, in the binary age of popular animation its range of use was limited due to technical difficulties. With the growing technological abilities of animation filmmaking, the production of colour and texture has become more complex. At the same time, the systematic binary production of stylised “limited popular animation” films with their limited use of colour and texture continues to appear in the market, as it is easier commercially to borrow standardised formulae and graphic styles. The realistic CGI style, however, does not oppose the continuing trend of stylised limited animation but rather complements it. The computer-generated popular films combine realistic colours, textures and appearances with stylised movement and colours and produce a new, hybrid style of popular animation imagery that expands the notions of subjectivity and critical thinking for both the viewer and the animator. This phenomenon occurs as novel technological developments enable a wider distribution of animational products, which in turn require an openness to cultural and social differences in order to appeal to a wide audience across the globe.

5.2 Implications of growing complexity in animational imagery and narratives

With the rapid growth of computer hardware, the sophistication of popular animation software is expanding in response. Animation software, such as Effect3D Studio, Poser 6, Crazy Talk, Maya, CTP and Flash, is becoming cheaper and now enables the use of colourful graphic effects in imagery and movement that can be easily adjusted to budgetary and time constraints in the commercial framework in which the popular animation industry works. This, in turn, has led to the production of visual libraries and clipart for animation filmmaking that enable the commercially profitable, repeated use of a film’s various elements and easier editing processes. For example CTP - cartoon Television Programme for animation filmmaking has in it a

real-time camera positioning with all layers ready on display: pan, zoom, rotation, opacity for spectacular transitions and blur. Popular animation imagery has always been closely linked with the technological progress that have shaped its production processes and the appearance of its product. This is now much more clearly seen as popular animation films that were either partly or completely computer-generated have met with critical and commercial success (Mitchell, 2002), whereas even a “hand-drawn” popular animation film nowadays involves a significant percentage of computer imagery, editing and movement.

5.2.1 Use of ready-made and repetitive elements in films an industrial answer to commercial demands

The popular animation industry links technological advancement with the need to speed up the production of films (due to the commercial framework in which it operates) by the use of ready-made formulae in imagery and movement that do not require much effort in their production. These ready-made formulae include visuals, sounds and movements, thus making the animator’s work more economical; they are also rich in textural realism that cannot be achieved by manual techniques.

Furniss (1999: 180) explains that in order to save costs of film production, animators reproduce movements, backgrounds and textures. Complete libraries are created of characters, designs and background. The artist



Image 32: prototype for figures of ants in *Antz*. (© 1998, Dreamwork)



Image 33: prototype for figure of bugs in *Bug's Life*. (© 2001, Disney/Pixar)

does not have to invent facial mimicry, movement or sound but rather use a series of different previously used elements. The ready-made elements do not only save on the cost of filmmaking, but they are commercially convenient as well, since by their repeated use of successful images the popular animation industry hopes that they will succeed once again. Hence, in popular TV animation series, often material is recycled with only small changes (Bendazzi, 1994: 238) as appearances and standardised formulae are borrowed from previously successful films to the point that the characters become almost undifferentiated from each other. For example, a similar prototype for a figure is used in both DreamWorks's *Antz* (1998) and in Disney/Pixar's *Bug's Life* (2001). Even the little girl in Disney/Pixar's *Monsters Inc.* (2001) looks as if she had escaped from *Toy Story* (Disney/Pixar, 1995). Not only characters are borrowed from the "image library", but gags, angles of shooting and textures as well. The films, especially those that are mostly done on computer, look as if they were done by the same hand and most probably with the same software.

Popular animation uses the ready-made technique mainly in order to facilitate and speed up the industrial production of films. Repetition is often used in popular animational cycles of movement, where the same drawings are used a few times in order to create an illusion of a continuous, repetitive movement, such as walking. An animator needs only to draw the figure moving the first three steps, then it can be repeated endlessly with only a change of background. Repetitions are also used in the plot itself in order to extend the sequentiality of the story into the next chapters. For example, the repetitive narratives of the successful long running series of Warner Bros.' *The Road Runner* (1949-2000) and *Tweety and Sylvester* (1958-2002) are based on the chase of one character after another in every episode. In both episodes the one that is pursued is the one that eventually bullies and overcomes the unfortunate pursuer and the only differences in the plots are the way in which the viewer's expectations are upset with novel gags and pranks, i.e., by having the pursued using methods of overcoming the pursuer that come as a surprise.

Within each of these films, repetitive patterns of lines, shapes, camera angles, compositions and a character's behaviour are easily identifiable. Of course, saving

money is not the only reason for the repetition. I am aware that there is also a psychological aspect of pleasure derived from seeing a repetitive image, sound or movement. Furthermore, I would argue that with repeated broadcasting of the same series on TV, it is possible for the viewer to become aware of the repetitive appearances in the films. The more one watches these repetitions, the more one becomes aware of how a film was made and the concepts behind a film's production. Furthermore, repetitions achieved by means of technology also produce random mistakes and a feeling of cultural and industrial homogeneity that may also stir a viewer's criticism of mere technological abilities as well as of film production *per se*. Here, I would argue, we eventually reach a point where a new type of critical viewer may be created. This view opposes the views of authors such as Adorno (1991, 1994), Baudrillard (1983, 1999), Benjamin (1991), Bourdieu (1999) and Debord (1992), who expressed anxiety in the face of technological developments, and portrayed the viewer as a passive mass in front of screens, addicted to voyeurism of commercial-industrial imagery. Of course, any new "toy" is greeted with fascination and perhaps accepted with eagerness while ignoring the previous ones. Yet, as time goes by, people become used to continuously advancing technology and change, and begin to recognise the principles that govern such technology and the ideology behind it.

It seems that the technological advancement that was initially interpreted by critical authors as spectacular and stupefying for the viewer has actually brought about a critical awareness of popular animation. In turn, a critical awareness of appearances and narratives in film raises questions that need to be answered on various technical and ideological levels.

5.2.2 Psychological effects of the manipulations of sight

Popular animation still often uses a fragmented, limited style to depict its narratives, especially when it is televised due to the medium limitations such as timing, film format, budget and commercial demands. However, the fact that popular animation film is fragmented does not necessarily need to be negatively evaluated. A musical tune, for example, is well remembered when listening to a new variation of

the tune. The listener keeps in mind the original version of the tune, and each new variation is superimposed on the earlier one. A similar process occurs with the fragmented image, where the viewer presumably can overlap the image gaps with his or her memory of a previous image. The repeated experience of observing fragmented images and sounds brings with it familiarity, which helps more easily to make sense of the fragmentation. Hall (1997: 70) accordingly explains that meaning and use are interconnected because use helps to fix the meaning of something. Meaning is learned by use.

As discussed above, the commercial framework within which popular animation is situated has led to the development of fragmented, limited movement. Such movement does not work according to the projection of 24 frames per second as in classical film production. Only a few frames are used to communicate an idea of continuous movement. Popular animation studios use a narrative technique similar to that suggested by Hitchcock in his films. Virilio (1994: 3) explains that “Alfred Hitchcock used the fact that viewers do not manufacture mental images on the basis of what they are immediately given to see, but on the basis of their memories, filling the blanks by themselves” . In such a technique, the continuity of narrative and movement is therefore created in the viewer’s mind retrospectively. Such a technique has led to the development of what can be called “illustrative animation” , in which movement exists mostly in a prolonged sound that gives an illusion of physical progress. However, there will be no actual movement seen but only the illustration of a frozen movement. For example, in the TV series *Powerpuff Girls* (Hanna-Barbera, 1998-2004), flying girls are depicted in the midst of their action in only about 10 illustrated frames and a sound, whereas a scene would normally comprise 24 frames per second. Other popular animation series have adapted a similar framework, such as Warner Bros.’ *Pinkie and The Brain* (1996) and *The Road Runner* (1949-2000).

Although with the introduction of computer technology the illustrated style of limited animation is being used less, the idea that one can psychologically manipulate the perception of continuity and movement has continued to be used. Movement and its continuity are created psychologically by the natural human

tendency to follow lines (Piper, 2001: 114). When an animated figure exits the frame on the left side and reappears suddenly on the right side in a new frame, the viewer can conclude naturally that time has passed and the character has travelled a certain distance. Fragmented imagery and movement therefore activate accepted conventions of dynamics and space, hence positioning a character in a certain location in a frame can create a movement. For example, a character can be located on the right side of a frame, then in the following frames it will appear at the far-left of the frame. Trusting conventional education to do its job, the animator does not need to produce the in-between frames of the movement since the viewers can complete it in their mind. Thus, the space between the edges of the frame is translated into a movement without additional efforts.

There are different psychological effects of the manipulations of sight that affect the actual seeing of a movement. For example, a figure that is close to the end of the

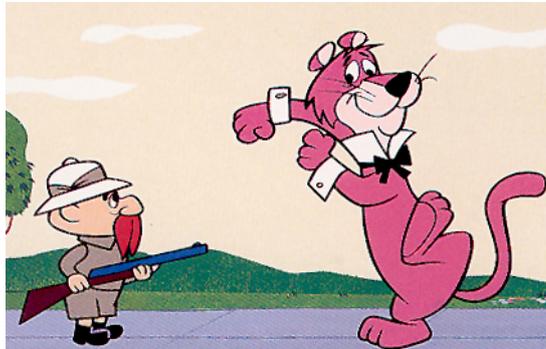


Image 34: psychological effect of composition on the sense of movement in "Exit, Stage left" in *Snagglepuss Cartoon*. (© 1996, Hanna-Barbera)

frame or an obstacle, will appear to the viewer as if it stops there because the brain defines the end of a frame or an obstacle as the finishing point of the movement (Piper, 2001: 114). Thus, animators depict the movement of a character, which is located at the edge of a frame, by rotating his legs backwards. A few different movements like these in one frame, or even a change of

size and colour without any movement at all, also give a viewer the sense of a very energetic movement (Zakia, 2002: 36-37). Animators do not search naturalism of movement and characters, but rather a sense of vitality that appears logical to a viewer.

Piper (2001: 96) explains that every single arrangement within a frame creates dynamic psychological meaning. For example, a diagonal line in a drawn image

hints that there is a dynamic movement and a lack of balance. Popular animation imagery takes great advantage of the psychology of human perception; exaggeration and caricature simply make this fact obvious.

On the one hand, computer technology produces spectacular images that cannot be achieved manually. On the other hand, the repeated use of effects and computerised imagery enables people to recognise familiar patterns and they therefore gradually become more critically aware of what is seen in animation films. The more the viewer is used to the commercial form of fragmentation, manipulation and effects in popular animational images, the more he or she is able to make sense of them. Therefore, the critical awareness of the viewer is directly related to the rising complexity of popular animated imagery.

5.3 Summary

As the technological abilities of popular animation filmmaking expand, its narratives and representation become more complex and sophisticated. Computer technology saves production costs as it enables a full-length feature film to be made on an individual basis, not involving a commercial corporation. Computer technology is employed in both limited popular animation and in computer-generated animation and enables the repeated use of patterns, movements and imagery. The more the viewer sees the computer-generated effects, the more he or she will become aware of the governing principles behind a film's production, and therefore possibly more critical towards animation films. It seems likely that a direct link exists between growing technological abilities and an increase in the complexity of a film's narrative and representation on the one hand and the fostering of a viewer who is more aware of animation's materiality and vocabulary.

This chapter has briefly discussed a newly emerging type of popular animation that combines both limited commercial qualities and complex computerised appearances. That in turn raises another question, which asks for an analysis of exactly how appearances and narratives in popular animation films have been

affected by this shift. The next part of the study explores that question through the analysis of my personal practice.

Part One – Conclusion

In parallel with social and cultural shifts occurring on a global level, popular animation is undergoing a process of change that is driving it towards a new approach that continues to work with a culturally and ideologically determined heterogeneity of codes. As the new ideological direction has not yet been clearly defined, the popular animation industry focuses on technological and externalised aesthetic aspects, while re-examining and undermining previous binary issues of entertainment and social values through its representation. Seeing that the popular animation industry reflects these changes in its narratives and representations, reveal it as a critical self-analyst that embraces a more complex multidimensional approach.

This part of the research has observed that by using unconventional depictions of the body's physiology and of the natural environment in an exaggerated and comical form, animational appearances seem unrealistic. The comic and the unconventional are emphasised (and eventually commodified), while aiming to appeal to young people, who are the main target audience of popular animation (Bendazzi, 1994). In its contemporary critical portrayal of previous elements within animational narratives and appearances, popular animation reworks old perceptions and promotes new ideological discourses that reflect back on a multidimensional global society. Since the popular animation industry works within a commercial framework, it adjusts its technical and narrative representation accordingly. Visual gags and effects are used commercially to entertain the viewer, while they also help animators to facilitate the industrial production of films. However, as an animator, I would argue that the commercially driven repeated use of effects, gags and imagery gradually makes them familiar to the viewer and may trigger a shift of attention away from observing animational humour and its laws of physics to the nature of animation's materiality.

As time goes by, the novelty of technology, I speculate, wear off, and instead of being perceived as purely spectacular, computerised animational imagery produced in the process of commercial competition will be perceived as more sophisticated and complex in its animational narratives and appearances. Consequently, being

aware of the technological and commercial style of popular animation may lead the viewer to become a critical observer of the animation industry.

The key challenges for me as a practitioner:

From this critical discussion on popular animation, issues of stereotype, body, youth and animation's materiality raise challenges for me as a practitioner. In my film, I emphasise an open-minded multidimensional approach that portrays cultural and ethnical diversity, for example a mixture of Eastern European and Eastern myths. The idea of a journey of a Prince towards achieving his goal and becoming a King is taken from Eastern European folklore, whereas the notions of contemplation, quietness and questioning the tradition is taken from Buddhist Eastern approach. My characters are not stereotyped but rather become symbols of what they represent, such as a young man, an old man and a horse. Their body is almost naturalistic yet it has its own sense of proportion that changes alongside with narrative. I am interested in creating a sense of understanding mentally and visually for the viewer rather than searching for naturalism. My film indeed deals with a young protagonist, like in most popular animation films, as we have seen in chapter three. However, at the end of the film, the narrative that portrayed a young Prince as a protagonist, in fact reveals an old King to be as important as the Prince. The old King knows from the beginning the journey that his son should undergo and the answers to his questions. Yet he reveals that knowledge only in the last scene of the film when he gives the crown to his son. Therefore youth is not the main issue in my film, as much as development, growth and self-reflection. That is why I am also interested in researching and portraying a full movement as opposed to limited commercial one. Of course being an independent practitioner such animation does not stand in commercial criteria of limited budget and timing. Yet I do follow the main guidelines of how to create a popular commercial animation film in terms of its narrative, editing, colour and composition as we shall see in chapters 6-10 in Part Two of the research. Throughout my practice I could not solve all the issues that have raised in my critical discussion, such as the issue of gender, timing, computer technology and capitalism. However, I was aware of these issues throughout the

practice as they were in the background of filmic development. Overall, all issues that have been raised in a theoretical discussion create a framework for my practice.

Part Two

Practice as Implementation of Theory and Adaptation to Practitioner's Use within Cinematic Industrial Framework

Whereas Part One of the research observes and analyses ideological and narrative discourses in popular animation in general, Part Two examines how application of these questions in personal practice reflects back on the observations and analyses in Part One. To examine that process, I analyse formal characteristics that bind the inner structure of popular animation film as seen through personal practice. At the same time, the identification of cinematic characteristics within my own film helps to situate my personal practice within the industrial framework of popular animation. I have explained earlier in the introduction the significance and the nature of practice in my research and its relationship with cinematic theory. Now in Part Two I explore the cinematic film form in general that can be applied to the animation film industry as well as to my personal practice. However, an understanding of popular animation film as a cinematic form requires looking at its many component units in their own right and analysing the meaning of each. Each cinematic characteristic has its own stance, situated within the social and cultural context of those who have created it, functioning as an additional meaning to the film's narrative.

However, analysis of my practice also aims to show that the formal and cinematic characteristics of popular animation film embody the animator's emotions and intentions. I believe that the animator's experience of events is to some degree manifested through formal and expressive characteristics, which in turn affect the audience. Before animating any event, the animator has to feel, act, and time out character's movement and then express it in an image. It is therefore obvious that the more an animator feels what s/he is acting as, the more s/he will make the event understandable to the viewers. For example, one cannot animate sadness if one has never experienced it, at least vicariously). Arguably, an animator can be perceived as someone who mediates between the perception of external reality and the observation of internal emotions. Clearly, such role of an animator as a mediator signifies a growing awareness of the role of the author in popular animation film.

Therefore, a characteristic quality of popular animation is the particular feel or tone that an animator brings to a film, which is what gives any film its unique quality. The smooth, commercial performances, which are the materialisation of popular animation imagery, in fact have an emotional richness, which is a reflection of the inner “tone” of the animator. This richness pervades and illuminates the seemingly non-individual narrative, the overall direction and the quality of representation in popular animation film and largely determines the character of the film.

Observation of the actual film making process itself can provide potential for a more in-depth, analysis of the popular animation industry. Hence making an animation film within a framework of popular animation and reflecting on it becomes almost a central part of the research process. In this context, ‘framework’, refers to the practical guidelines of how to make popular animation film in relation to commercial and industrial demands, and while my own practice is not constrained by such demands, it does attempt to follow the general language of popular animation filmmaking. This self-reflexive animation raises issues that were overlooked in the prior analysis of popular animation from a theoretical critical perspective only. Thus the current research also evolves through action and reflection on that action – an approach that emphasises the authorial aspect of multidimensional popular animation, as seen through the critical self-observation of the animator.

The analysis demonstrates the following points:

- Formal characteristics have autonomous meanings alongside the narrative development of appearances in a film.
- The compositional arrangement in a film articulates conceptual structures that reflect psychological and social perceptions of reality.
- A critical, self-reflexive analysis of practice reveals how personal views affect the narrative construction in a film.
- Recognising cinematic structures within popular animational practice raises the status of animated film from an industrial, commercial product to an artistic cinematic endeavour.

- Self-reflexive analysis of personal practice shows how popular animation can develop further by combining a commercial approach with experimental artistic expression. My practice indicates that a unique relationship between popular commercial and experimental animation is possible and so complement the medium and develop its possibilities.

Chapter 6:

Autonomous Meaning of Formal Characteristics of Narrative and General Filmic Appearance

To understand popular animation film as a creative system requires analysis of each of its binding units. Each formal characteristic of an animation film has its own stance in addition to having narrative meaning. For example using a certain type of contour line may affect the narrative or change it by adding certain characteristics. Therefore each element of formal characteristics in a film has a stance which is also a meaning. That autonomous stance exists alongside the perceptual views of those who created them and the cultural context within which they are situated. I am aware that there are much more profound meanings to colour, line and texture, than the meanings I have in mind here. However, in my research I only concentrate on revealing the significance of those elements as seen through the visual experience of my film.

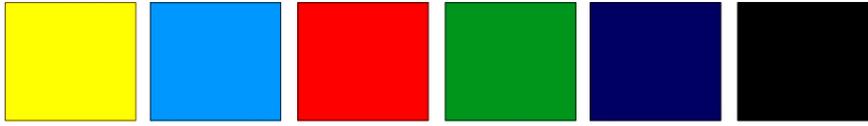
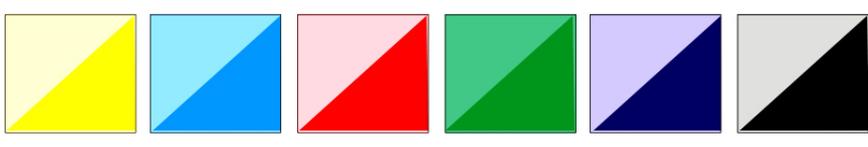
The elements of formal characteristics such as line, colour and texture have meaning that often depends on the observer, in terms of how they are visually experienced, (Zakia, 2002: 102). However, animators of popular animation have succeeded to employ the perceptual effect of those elements in such a generic way that many viewers will most probably ascribe similar meanings to them when seeing a particular colour, texture or line. For example, when seeing an object turning its colour to red, animators assume that it will be understood that the object is turning hot or angry (when it is a character). This is particularly useful for a commercial approach to distributing animated images. This chapter observes how I, as an animator, use colour in my film and what effect it has on the film. Section 6.1 analyses how colour reflects my (animator's) emotions as well as my intentions, as any encounter with the substances that have colour in them is psychologically prone to raise a certain emotion in the observer (Elkins, 1999: 7). Elkins argues that the emotions raised give the observer immediate yet intuitive knowledge about the perceived event. That knowledge in popular animation is further developed through the use of line, which structures the animated frame, as shown in Chapter Five. In

Section 6.2, however, line is analysed through my practice and therefore implies aspects of authorship. I believe that even in the commercial framework of popular animation, a line speaks of authorship via its thickness and curliness, imprinted with the long hours of an animator's body position at work and the skill with which every repeated line appears different and unique. As colour and line create textures, Section 6.3 observes how texture speaks about reality. The analysis of such a relationship of visual elements with reality is similar in some ways to that of the Gestalt school of psychology. However, while they have reached this observation through critical academic discussion and analysis, the insights discussed in this thesis were achieved through personal practice and observation of the animator's actions in the field.

6.1 Colour combining commercial and individual artistic approaches

Animators often use basic graphic colours to quickly make messages that are clear and memorable. However, in my practice I felt that these colours needed an expansion of the emotional range of a viewer's response to them, which led me to use soft pastel colours. As my film was made in the framework of popular animation, I combined commercial and personal approaches, which in turn led to a mix of graphic and pastel qualities that I have called "atmographic". The graphicity of strong, basic colours helped me to structure the narrative framework of the film, whereas pastels gave me artistic freedom and authorship in the visuality of the frames.

Table 6.1 Identification of colour in my practice

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Graphic colour that is often used in binary popular animation</p> |  |
| <p>Pastel colour that is often used in multidimensional popular animation</p> |  |
| <p>Atmographic colour that is used in my practice</p> |  |

6.1.1 Colour as expression of emotions and as statement

In popular animation, colour is used as a means of communication from animator to viewer and therefore becomes a statement even when intuitively or arbitrarily chosen. However, colour as a visual experience has social, cultural and psychological connotations both for the animator and the viewer (Leslie, 2002: 246).

Most of the forms in my film are naturalistic shapes with very definite, graphic

contours while they are filled in with non-naturalistic, graphic colours that have symbolic meaning. Thus, for instance, yellowish orange was chosen to represent any warm country, and bluish white represents any cold country. The horse was chosen to be red for several reasons: Red, being the colour of blood, is associated by many people with desire and passion since in



Image 35: Use of symbolic graphic red colour in *The Truth*. (© Natalie Dekel, 2004)

moments of passion, blood circulation is increased and one's skin may appear red in colour. The other reason is that red being a very strong, warm colour, it will be easily seen within a frame. Red is a colour that evokes a primordial instinct to pay attention (Piper, 2001:112, Vol. 1), even in a mix of many other colours. Red is accordingly used in many commercial strategies as a colour to attract the viewer. Likewise, in my film red is used to focus the viewer's gaze on the main subject of the journey, the Prince, who is always close to the red horse. Therefore, although the colours in the film overall are not naturalistic, their symbolic qualities were chosen from a natural, realistic environment.

Colour symbolism serves important roles in art, religion and politics as well as in everyday life. However, strong emotional connotations associated with other phenomena can affect colour perception so that, for example, a heart-shaped figure cut from orange paper may seem to have a redder hue than a geometric figure cut from the same paper because of the specific psychological meaning that is associated with the shape. In the same way, the choice of colour and shape in my practice has enriched the associative connotations the film has for viewers. For example, a horse often carries connotations of movement, power and natural forces, something seen by our measuring the power of a vehicle to move a load in "horsepower". By choosing to represent the horse in red, I have combined the symbolism of red signifying fire / desire with that signifying power / motion, which together create a unique viewer's guide for keeping track of the protagonists in the film. The combination of these symbols also raises the issue of combining personal, inner motivation with commercial, industrial motivation. The rest of the colours and shapes in the film follow the character's culture and the geographic climate in which they reside, and communicate emotional aspects of how characters think and feel.

Most of the time, my choice of colours was intuitive, and when the colours "asked" to fill some shapes while leaving others alone, I did so. In that way, some colours came into existence, while others faded away. Colours express mainly the emotional, impressionist side of me as an artist. However, it is clear that whether I have chosen colour consciously or unconsciously, the choice affects the intention to

be communicated as well as the viewer, and the latter directly so (Coghill, 2000: 131).

6.1.2 “Atmographic” colour as combination of commercial graphic colour with naturalistic artistic qualities



Image 36: Use of atmographic colour style in *The Truth*. (© Natalie Dekel, 2004)

During the filmmaking, the choice of one colour, black for instance, led to the choice of the others, such as red and green. Initially I intended only to have a few symbolic colours in the film, while leaving the line to live freely on the paper. However, after using blacks to create particular atmospheric scenes of despair and confusion, I felt that I needed

pastel colours to balance these emotions until they gradated enough into the whiteness of the paper for the viewer to feel the harmony. Otherwise, I felt, that there seemed to be no communication between the materiality of the paper on which the film is drawn and the actual narrative and its characters.

Consequently I have used two types of colour in the film. One is a “pure” basic graphic colour, such as red, yellow, blue, black and white. The other type is the “atmospheric” colour, in which the artist, despite the fact that she wants to depict one colour, such as red, for example, will insert reflections of other colours into the red, in order to create a particular atmospheric effect. In the film, I have mixed the two types and created an “atmospheric graphicity” or “atmographicity”. In that atmographic style, some objects have received a direct graphic colour, such as the horse, the sun, the candle and the front trees, whereas other objects have received textures and gradations of colours that create an atmospheric mood, such as the hair, nature as background and the sky. As opposed to the “non-graphic”, pictorial colour gradations, graphic colours communicate in a “cold”, clear, logical way, whereas the

colour gradations communicate emotions, an ambiguous sense of reality between the character's world and the viewer's own. In the atmospheric style, the atmospheric colours such as pastel greens and browns easily converse with graphic colours, such as red and black.

The conversation between the colours raises an illusory feeling of three-dimensional depth. Simple gradation in colour can achieve depth or dimensionality, as it produces a sense of light and shadow, which gives objects their feeling of mass and weight. The gradation in colour therefore tells a story alongside the story that is narrated through voice and shape. I did not want the story told by colours to overpower the narrative but rather to create a continuous dialogue between colour as an independent element, my intent behind it and the viewer. That is why atmospheric colours balance and harmonise the intensity of the statement made by the colour with the emotion of the overall narrative. Furthermore, I have used the contour line to combine the intensity of graphic colour with the spaciousness of pastel colours. This in turn gave me a sense of control over colour in the film.

The graphic structure of the film indicates its link to the popular animation industry, which uses graphic colour to simplify and clarify the information communicated quickly and efficiently. On the other hand, the use of pastel colours has come in an impulsive, emotional, experimental type of work as regards the location of the colours. I developed my ideas about colours midstream, while working, piling colours and textures on top of each other or deleting the computerised layers in Photoshop, so one can still see the previous colour underneath. The fact that the two types of colour are combined into an atmospheric style implies the possibility of a complementary approach between the commercial, industrial and the independent, artistic styles of popular animation. That complementary approach indeed happens now in multidimensional animation, which is still commercial and therefore uses graphic colours on the one hand, while on the other, computer technology, makes it easier to introduce complex textures and pastel colours into the films.

I use colour to reflect on my animation filmmaking. However, analysis of how a colour works in a film reveals a network of processes within the film's production,

which through their interaction and transformation continuously recreate my practice as a whole. My personal filmmaking, on the one hand, follows the structural framework of the popular animation industry, for example, by using a linear narrative structure, graphic appearances and the device of an ideological message. On the other hand, my personal filmmaking shows how I experimented within that framework by using various materials and techniques of expression to discuss the dimensionality of the popular animation film as well as personal opinions. It is therefore a complex, contradictory system, which is open in its artistic approach and closed in its popular framework as a result of the necessary interaction between an animator as an artist and the industrial, commercial system.

To operate within that system, a balance between the personal and the industrial is continuously sought. That search is partly reflected in the embodiment of the line. The contour line has been used as a mediator to connect colours and shapes. The following section examines the way the line is used in my practice and the messages that it communicates in the film.

6.2 Line indicating authorship in commercial framework

The line gives freedom to personal expression within largely fixed forms and styles of the industrial and commercial framework of production. In my practice, the line contains within its graphic appearance my personal imprint, a psychological emphasis that characterises me as an animator. An animator draws lines professionally based on experience, while maintaining a constant dialogue of mood and thought between the animator and the line. The energy of the line has to be in total control in order to reach perfection of self-expression. In two-dimensional animation, the line becomes the main character that creates an image. The line has a meaning, a voice that tells the viewer a story about the essence that has created it and given it a power to create something else in turn.

In my film the contour line has been used as a mediator to connect colours (seemingly unstable, emotional elements) and shapes (that are more logical, intellectual structures). Being an animator, I draw lines as a creator, not a technician.



Image 37: line as an expressive language in *The Truth*. (© Natalie Dekel, 2004)

I do not know what the detailed chemical structure of the ink is or the architecture of the computer that the film is edited on or how the paper is composed of fibres. As an animator, I work mainly with feel for a movement, with intuition and on the basis of the reconstruction of his or

her memories. Drawing is a matter of touch: the pressure of the pencil on the paper. One slowly becomes an expert in distinguishing between

degrees of line, thickness of ink trace. Line becomes a professional language.



Image 38: Authorship embodied in the animated line in *The Truth*. (© Natalie Dekel, 2004)

Drawing an animated image is maintaining a constant dialogue between animator and line. In order to draw any line in my film, I had to plan the text and the scene, then to actually act out the movements and the postures of the characters, and then to time this movement and postures out and animate them on paper. I have become my character. During the drawing process I concentrate on the line, but I constantly think about the feelings and actions of the character at that particular moment when I am drawing

character's face and body. In addition to those feelings, I had my own thoughts and feelings.

My personal mood and thoughts influenced the story line and conveyed certain information that in turn affected the overall intention and message of the film. That

information is expressed in a line that bears the bent body at work, over a light-box, in darkness. Every curl of line speaks of the animator's fingers that unfold it. The more time one spends drawing, the more one will be aware of the meaning of substances, little curls, angles, a change in the weight of the drawing hand and the thickness of line – by simply looking. The sensations I get from the lines come from the marks they have left and the way they were made. When I look at the substances of the film, they occupy my mind by invading it with thoughts of the animator's body position held at work. As an animator I act, play and feel the character and thus embody my personality in the frames. If we were to take music as an analogy, then the animator is the conductor and the opera at once. While being the conductor of the whole animation process, it is easy to slip into the passive role of directing the movement of characters and backgrounds until it becomes automatic. Yet, I insisted on activating my critical thinking in every frame and composition. Thus, I have tried to avoid repeating any movement or recycling any images of already existing scenes. That aspect of my practice distances it from the commercial framework of popular animation, as it would not be industrially and commercially practical. However, it raises the issue of critical reflexive thinking behind the film.

What makes the animated line interesting for me is the precise sensation that is aroused differently in each frame. To sense the meaning that a pen gives to any animator, one needs to know how the work of pushing, correcting, leading, stretching, erasing can occupy the mind. The pen is something you work with, but also think about. Paper can be soft or hard, absorbing the ink in a particular way. A pen can be too thick or thin, scratching the paper or sliding on it. Then it becomes alive by gradually unfolding itself in every frame. I have found that the act of drawing an image again and again with slight differences is hypnotic and therapeutic. Elkins (1999: 11) observes in relation to art practice of painting that repeated gestures naturally fall into line with one another. Therefore animators are constantly working against their natural tendency to repeat, to make sure that one kind of mark does not overwhelm the others. The energy of the line is controlled to the end in order to reach perfection. Otherwise any little mistake in the frame will create a disturbing, jumping effect when the whole film is projected. All lines work one upon another in a unity of layers, creating an illusion of life and of volume.

According to Gestalt psychologists (Zakia, 2002: 47-48), objects and events are visually perceived as meaningful when they comprise a complete whole rather than being perceived as comprised of their constitutive elements of lines and dots. Yet, my experience shows that a dot can evolve into a line that will eventually create an object, all the while having a visual and emotional meaning even before it has enclosed itself in a shape or a figure. My practice indicates that the process of unfolding a line is as significant as the complete shape or form. In doing so, my practice is linked with the multidimensional approach that portrays popular animation as an open, dynamic and changeable system rather than a perceptually fixed one.

The line is a tool for searching for individual expression. A mere combination of various line shapes provides the animator with a plethora of opportunities for the subjective expression of both general industrial stylistic traits and of personal characteristics. An arrangement of forceful, mainly straight strokes in accentuated, sharp graphic angles emphasises the dramatic and expressive traits that were often used in commercial binary popular animation. In contemporary animation, as seen in my practice, this method is more and more substituted by or combined with soft, creative, individual or computer-generated lines. Soft lines and smoothly rounded forms stress individual creativity, constituting the formal equivalent of personal, lyric and multidimensional qualities of expression. Developing an individual line that goes hand in hand with the atmospheric colours of my film has in turn brought forth a certain use of textures that changed their meaning, position and even dimensionality.

6.3 Texture in popular animation

Texture in its essence is a combination of line and colour. Details of this combination are particularly important in popular animation filmmaking as they help a film to appear interesting and dynamic. Every part of its filmic

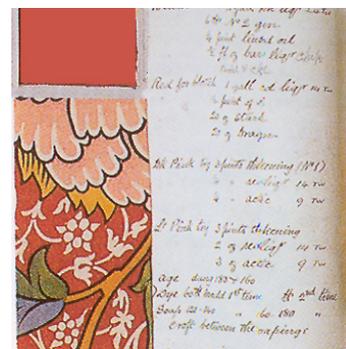


Image 39: Pages from the Merton Abbey Dye Book, 1882-91 (© Naylor, G., 1989, [William Morris by himself](#), Macdonald and Co. Ltd.)

appearances flourishes with details as a result of the animator's observation of reality. Without any doubt, texture expresses the personal views of those who made it. The actual process of animating the details together, combining them into a new whole, gives texture its quality, while by themselves the details do not. It is only because of the animator converting, selecting, inputting into computer, setting out, cutting, fitting, cropping and finishing that a very small portion of textural details comes to be thought by the general audience as good, entertaining material. Therefore, texture in popular animation embodies in it an imprint of the animator's personality and thought processes. The complexity of texture does not stop there, as it also portrays balanced relationships between dimensional projections in a film, analogous to the complexity in the representation of ideas behind it.

6.3.1 Texture as imprint of animator's relationship with materials used

Texture means details, the significance of which lies in their ability to make the whole interesting, dynamic and live. I learned about details from William Morris, who mastered the details and created a unique world of textures. The details that sustained William Morris are similar to those that can be observed in nature. Every tree, bush, building and person flourishes with details. Animators, similar to William Morris, observe their environment in great detail, making any story appear enchanting by the unfolding complexity within the arrangement of its inner, constitutive units.

William Morris's love for perfection can be also seen in animator's long hours of handicraft, believing in beauty that will connect with a large number of people and that may have an effect on their attitudes to life. However, while Morris would work using only his hands, I combined in my film working with my hands and the industrial tools of computer

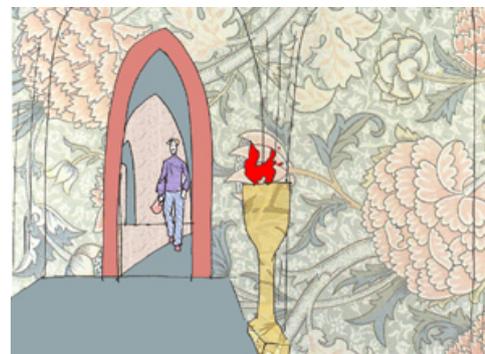


Image 40: Use of Morris's textures in *The Truth*. (© Natalie Dekel, 2004)

software that facilitate production, making it both easier and less time consuming. My work does not rebel against the mechanical and industrial aspects of popular animation, but rather emerges from it and seeks to develop it. Yet, one still can find parallels between Morris's designs of texture and my work, as his work and its energy have had an influence on me. Morris's tapestry designs required the hard work of stitching, similar to the hard work of colouring and drawing every single frame in my animation. Each Morris tapestry is a scene of life, and the making of it is an examination and recreation of the present moment. Working with small details that result in one big piece of art depicting a scene of nature is an act of re-creating life. In a similar way, the colouring of each frame in my animation results in a final movement, which is an examination of the single, framed, frozen moments of observed reality. William Morris's textures are very graphic in their appearance and echo my search for an English cultural essence through the use of graphic and spatial appearances, as found in my own drawings. I therefore used his graphically lined textures, rich yet materially light, to be the foundation upon which my own line lives and develops. My work shows a fluidity of line and an appreciation to the craft involved, the nature of work and living my dream. At first it may seem contradictory that during my search for an individual, personal animational craftsmanship I would use the ready-made textures of William Morris. However, I would argue that the use of other materials within my artwork does not reduce the value of individual and personal craftsmanship.

David Pye (1968: 2) examined the notion of craftsmanship and design. His findings on the relationships between material and craftsman in terms of design are very similar to the relationships obtaining between animated materials and animator. Material like paper, pen or ready-made textures, in their raw form, is not very individual or unique. Only worked material has quality. Only when put together do they show their quality, which singly they had not. It is only because of the animator selecting, working on the computer or by hand, cutting, painting on it, fitting and editing, that a very small portion of the paper, line or texture becomes a personal, unique artefact. My individual craftsmanship, as David Pye (1968: 4) says, "means simply workmanship using any kind of technique in which the quality of the result is

not predetermined, but depends on the judgement, dexterity and care which the maker exercises as he works”.

Working with texture means to realise that texture has a life of its own. It depicts objects, such as a blanket or grass, but it is also the object itself – it is a blanket, it is grass. Interestingly, texture has always remained static by nature, while lines and characters move freely on it through the frame. In a way, textures have substituted for paper, whereas it has also helped me realise my own creative freedom by using other materials, such as denim, cotton wool, photographs, computer colours, ink of the pen and the paper itself. It seems that the objects and the textures in my film act as a system of internal metaphors impacting the senses and giving an illusion of dimensionality and realistic perception.

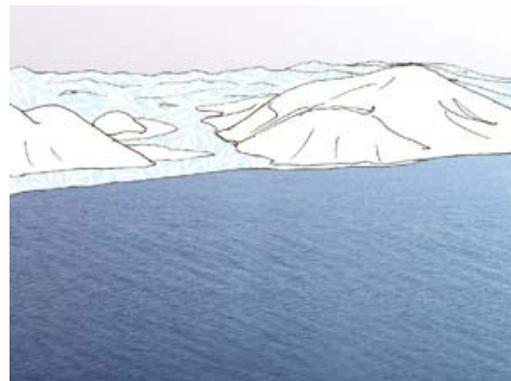


Image 41: Flat space in *The Truth*. (© Natalie Dekel, 2004)

6.3.2 Texture as medium of dimensional perception

It is interesting that the physical perception of the image of the external world on the retina is essentially flat or two-dimensional, and yet it is possible to appreciate its three-dimensional character with remarkable precision. It seems therefore that the perception of popular animated imagery is more natural to the physicality of the observer than for example live-action film. So how does a viewer perceive three-dimensionality if initially it appears flat and two-dimensional? To a great extent, this is possible by virtue of the simultaneous presentation of different aspects of the world to the two eyes or in other words by binocular projection. However, in popular animation the dimensionality as it is represented is mainly monocular, whereas the use of textures, movement and relative positions of objects in the frame make its three-dimensionality possible.

The patterns I have used in the film create its dimensionality and depth by combining the animated moving line and their own nature. Some patterns are flat and graphic, others rich in details and gradation of colours, such as photographs or scanned cotton wool. The flat, graphic patterns can make the object go back into the frame, as there are no lines that produce a sense of angles that people associate with the perception of depth and dimensionality. The texture conveys an impression of a perfectly flat object with lines drawn on it. The characters appear to be walking upon that flat space with no dimensions and look as if they had been cut out and surrealistically positioned in a “no-place, no-time” un-dimensional situation that gives the film an imaginary, dream-like quality. For example, when the Prince thanks the Nomads in the film, he is the only “three-dimensional” moving shape within a flat two-dimensional environment. The lack of depth creates an axial plane on the surface of the frame, where the figure of the Prince seems to move in two dimensions only. At other times, I have used three-dimensional objects to be scanned into the computer in order to create a feeling of three-dimensionality. These patterns produce a perceptual sensation that makes the drawn objects in the frame appear to be protruding and dimensional, and therefore receive in the viewer’s mind an additional quality that is associated with solid objects, for example, one of liquids, depending on the texture.



Images 42, 43: Texture arouses a dimensional experience in *The Truth*. (© Natalie Dekel, 2004)

The textural quality in the film triggers the phenomenon of synesthesia, where a viewer experiences one sense, for example that of touch, as a result of another, for example, sight (Zakia, 2002: 86-87). Although the phenomenon of synesthesia was

studied and described by the Gestalt school of psychology, I reached similar conclusions through personal practice and experience. I am aware of the body of knowledge, such as that of the perceptual psychology, that exists on that subject. However, here I concentrate on the knowledge gained as a result of my experience that indicates that textures give rise to memories of feelings and sensory sensations simply through the experience of visual observation. Textures connect the sense of sight with the sense of touch and create a multidimensional experience of the film. For example, the roughness of stone or the softness of cloth is perceived in our consciousness not only when we touch but also when we observe it. That is why the textures in the film appear to be “real”, very persuasively so. For example, I have connected the viewer’s memory of rough stone with the strong graphic line and brownish colour of a photograph of rough texture. These were enough to arouse in the viewer’s memory the feeling of a stone. In another scene, a photograph of the sea makes the lines with which a drawn iceberg was created seem enveloped in the visual feeling of a “real” liquid.

The drawn, flat, graphic two-dimensional line seems to coexist with three-dimensionality or another dimensionality of the texture without ceasing to function and unfold the narrative at the same time. The texture creates a kind of noise and chaos in the frame, while the line seems to introduce order and structure into that chaos. This adaptiveness of my film situates it in the popular multidimensional framework of which I have spoken above. The use of photographic patterns within the film corresponds to contemporary, realistic, computerised imagery incorporated into animation films. That style of using textures can be seen in contemporary popular animation films such as *Finding Nemo* (Disney/Pixar, 2003) and *Sinbad – The Legend of the Seven Seas* (DreamWorks, 2003), where the sea was structured and mapped according to live recordings of the sea and then generated three-dimensionally by means of computer software.

In my film, the transition between the dimensions embraces the ambiguity of formal characteristics and graphic appearances in the film. The use of photographs or other “live” materials, on the one hand, is a particular choice of texture that embraces a particular feeling, and on the other hand, reconstructs the idea of a flat,

two-dimensional plane that is a texture in its essence, as a decoded experience of a three-dimensional reality. The complexity that emerges from the textural network in the film describes the dynamics of the animator's reconstruction and decoding of perceived reality.

6.4 Summary

Formal characteristics in popular animation film involve aesthetic and psychological responses that influence physical and emotional sensations. The analysis of the meaning and role of these formal characteristics gives rise to the whole organisational structure of my practice. Producing a personal film within the guidelines of the popular animational industry, which are explained in more detail in chapter 10, has given me an opportunity to experiment with the issues of formal characteristics and dimensionality in the film. As every part of the narrative and the appearances in the film flourish with details, they need to be understood as they decode the animator's observation, reconstruction and abstraction of reality. The actual process of animating these details gives them quality, which springs from the workmanship of the animator.

This chapter has examined colour, line and texture as a film's basic components that raise the issue of complexity within a film, as they affect and are affected by narrative and representational modes. The observation of the animator's craftsmanship and professional use of these formal characteristics is to examine the way the animator's personal abilities and expression can be developed further within the industrial framework of popular animation. By examining how formal characteristics are arranged and articulated within film production, the conceptual structures behind them can be revealed. Those structures reflect the psychological and social reality within which the animator is operating.

Chapter 7:

Articulation of Conceptual Structures in Compositional Arrangement

In many popular animation films, compositional arrangement is mainly used to support commercial demands as explained earlier in chapter 4. At the same time, formal characteristics indicate the occurrence of events rather than being the events themselves (Bendazzi, 1994: 437). My practice, on the other hand, shows that compositional arrangement can be used within the same framework of production to portray more complex levels of the psychological perception of animational narratives, such as the thinking process of the characters, ideological statements and abstract principles.

This chapter observes the arrangement of formal characteristics in the animational frame that give rise to meanings in the film. A change in the position of one object changes the entire statement of the image. Analogously, the Gestalt school of psychology argues that, “components interact to such an extent that changes in the whole influence the nature of the parts and vice versa” (Rudolf Arnheim, quoted by Zakia (2002: 29). Compositional dynamics unfold the expression in a film and produce complex meanings such as those of psychological situations of tension or contemplation. Since composition in the animation frame consists of both the space and the visual dynamics of formal characteristics within the frame, Section 7.1 analyses the use of space as a characteristic that raises the critical complexity of the film. Within that analysis I classify space into various dynamic systems where each one is responsible for unfolding various expressive, narrative and critical elements, and therefore emphasises the core narrative statement of the film. Section 7.2 engages the visual origin of events in the film to reveal a foundation upon which the narrative is constituted, such as the matter of balance and emotional dynamics between formal characteristics within the frame.

7.1 Space and critical complexity

According to the metaphysical terminology of space, whatever falls within space is limited, as one space excludes another and no two spaces can be simultaneous. However, my practice indicates that space is a very complex network of visual and critical ideas that overlap each other and often one unfolds from another (Einstein & Infeld, 1938: 173). I structure my notion of space on Einstein and Infeld's exploration of how events occur within spaces. They are interested in relationships of events from within one space to that which is without. For example they observe that a person who speaks within a room will sound completely different from outside of that room, even though the room and the person exist both in the same space. In my practice, I have also noticed various events that occur within the filmic space.

I have observed several types of space in my film that evolve from each other and constitute the entire plane within the film. I speak of an "architectural space", which is the space that envelopes architectural structures of human and natural environments within the film. That in turn led me to explore the "exterior landscaptual space" which enables one to observe the meaning and the art of the visually arranged depiction of the environment. As this space is positioned in and as a landscape, it includes the architectural space, yet it is different and completely separate from it. Further observation of architectural and landscaptual spaces brought me to acknowledge another type of space that exists within these two, yet alongside them. It is "emotional space", which visually portrays a character's emotional intensity. It thus seems that space within a film unfolds as a box within a box. Furthermore, with my growing awareness of the interrelations of these spaces, the complexity of my perception of them grew proportionally. Each space is not only created within the previous one but also is produced by the interrelations with other elements, such as the formal characteristics in the frame. Another type of space that exists simultaneously alongside emotional space, is "metaphysical space". In this space the inner world of characters has been externalised either visually or vocally. It does not build up an emotion that follows the narrative as emotional space does, but speaks of the contemplation and critical observation by the characters of their environment and relationships.

Up until now, the analysis of various spaces in the film has led us constantly inward, from physical spaces to metaphysical and emotional ones. Nevertheless, there is yet another type of animational space, which is very abstract to perceive but once a person is trained to see it, is discernible in every frame. That is the “artistic space”, which is the painterly substance in which objects, characters and events exist. It is dim enough not to attract attention, but “breathes” and gives a sense of air and distance. It is clear that this observation of spaces underlines the complexity that popular animation – in this case, in my practice – has taken on, together with my critical thinking about its representation and narratives.

My observation of these spaces and the units comprising them is derived from personal practice; however, I am aware that the Gestalt school of psychology has also analysed how people organise and group visual elements. Contrary to the



Images 44,45: Circular structure of architectural space in *The Truth*. (© Natalie Dekel, 2004)

Gestalt analysis, I do not seek to find a closed system of visuals that comprises the whole (Zakia, 2002: 53), but rather observe an open network of dynamics within my imagery. I do not think that every frame in animation drives towards stability, as the Gestalt school might have suggested, but rather I see every frame as having dynamic relationships between chaotic and organised movements that create the whole, the so-called “balance”. And it is precisely because of the constant dynamics and “imbalances” in the compositional arrangements that animation may engage the viewer’s sight and mind.

7.1.1 Architectural space providing narrative framework

The narrative in my film begins to unfold within an architectural space. Zakia (2002: 56) argues that closed areas are more readily perceived than areas with open contours, as they appear more formed and stable than anything depicted without physical boundaries. The fixed geometric forms that create the architectural space in my film, however, spring from a metamorphosis of colour and shape. The freshness and the seeming incompleteness and fluidity of these forms may give rise to critical observation of a film's narrative from its very beginning.

Architectural space in my film creates a physical environment in which narrative events take place. Buildings serve like resting points, in which a significant change occurs in the unfolding events. Their structure is often circular to signify more of an inner process that the characters undergo rather than simply following a fixed narrative line. For example, the inside space of the King's castle is circular, as is the Prince's journey. So as the story begins to unfold when the Prince walks in the circular corridor to meet his father, it might very well have been the same journey that the King made when he was a Prince. The circular design of the castle's corridors loosens up the fixed binary terms of what is "right" and what is "left", both physically and spiritually. The symbolism of "right" and "left" has been undermined in my film. Hence, the King has lost his right arm – the arm of physical power, yet the power is within him, in his personality. Righteousness is his identity, whereas the Prince is identified with the left – the journey, the process of searching for the right thing.

The inner journey has become the concept of the film. In that journey the main significance is found in understanding and self-consciousness of the process, rather than in its direction. Through architectural space, characters as well as the viewer obtain knowledge of various cultures and their environment. Architectural space acts as a point in which information is circulated and evolved, giving rise to further implications within the narrative. Although, from within, architectural space is organic and fluid in its formation of knowledge and narrative information, from outside it appears fixed, solid and unchanging. This external harshness is used as protection of the inner development of the narrative. For example, externally the

King's castle is depicted as a big solid building inspired by Gaudi's Sagrada Familia Cathedral in Barcelona, Spain. Although it appears big and unconquered, it was actually initiated in the metamorphosis of a dot into a line, into an open fluid system that eventually became a solid building. That architectural space completes a circle in its evolution from an organic shape into an industrial, mechanical space and back into an organic one, since towards the end of the film the castle's harshness softens

to the point that the viewer even becomes aware of the air within the castle.



Images 46, 47: Inspiration for King's Castle in *The Truth*. (© Natalie Dekel, 2004)

Architectural space in the film is created with geometrical forms that are used as building units for the castle, igloo and other residential spaces that the Prince encounters on his way. That space indicates the location of the character's residence, but it also works as a set of codes within which other non-physical spaces were developed, such as emotional and metaphysical spaces. Architectural space provides meaning for other types of spaces and is itself created and located within the larger, exterior environmental, landscaptual space.

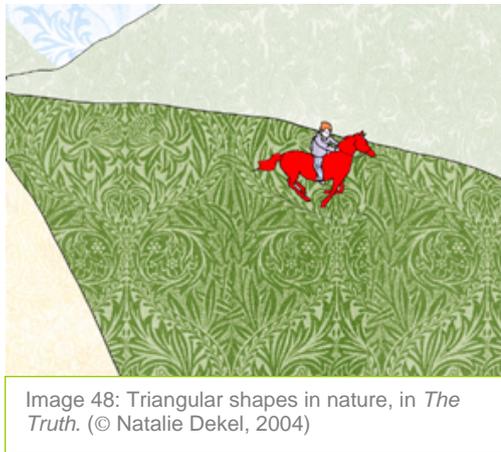
7.1.2 Exterior space both stimulator and guide

Exterior space in my film is found in the depiction of nature with its wild, fluid, changeable and adaptive capacity. Nature in my film is portrayed as open and changeable and therefore represents my individual development as well as positions it against the binary approach in animation. It raises the issue of complexity and sensitivity of both the concept of nature in the film and its appearance.

Clearly, since I have made my film here in Britain, I have been greatly inspired by the breadth of the English landscape. However, I also gave it a symbolic

meaning. The great sky and the low horizon reflect the breadth of the mind, the scope of the thought and the imagination. The openness of nature represents the openness of one's perception. People in the film usually tend to slowly integrate and disappear within nature to show that people and nature are one and that they exist in a delicate balance that needs to be carefully maintained. It is also the first time in my films that animal characters have as significant a presence as people do. The external depiction of the natural and the landscaptual becomes an indicator of an inner

process in which knowledge derives from inner experience and is mediated by intuition.



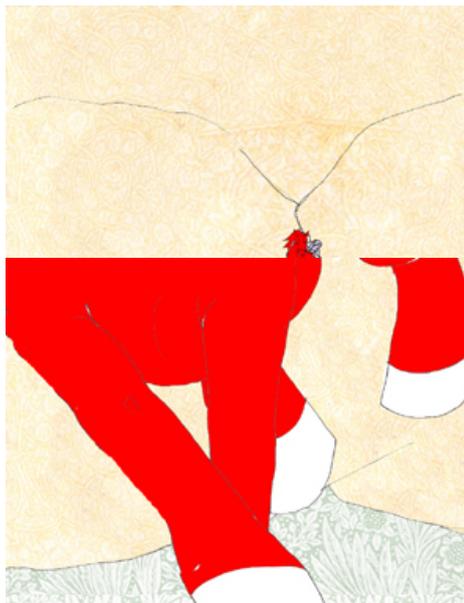
development of geometric forms in a space, while any diagonal line or shape will arouse a feeling of movement or of a process of change (Piper, 2001, Vol. 1: 112-115). On the other hand, horizontal lines and movement remind the viewer that s/he usually rests while in a horizontal position. Therefore these movement and lines will be perceived as relaxing and quiet (Piper, 2001, Vol. 1: 112-115). Since many frames in my film involve horizontal compositions, I would say that it even achieves some kind of “meditative” quality in which nature and landscaptual space act both as a stimulator and a guide. Often the roads are alive and move with the characters to show them the way. For example, the road upon which the Prince in *The Truth* rides on his journey, is as much alive and mutable as any other “live” object in the film. The exterior landscape space in the film is not realistic but rather a conceptual, heraldic idea of it.

Movement and adaptability of nature in the film are structural units of the whole environment within which the narrative takes place. As that space evolves and changes, so the story becomes more complex and fluid and leaves the final answer to the core question of the narrative to the viewer.

7.1.3 Emotional and metaphysical space

The fact that within physical space one may find other types of space which are less physical indicates that the fixed perception of what is stable and rational has in it the seeds of irrationality. Clearly that observation in my practice reflects on contemporary, global society, in which rapid technological and scientific changes

and tele-communication technologies bring ambiguity and instability as integral parts of everyday life.



Images 49, 50: Emotional space in *The Truth*. (© Natalie Dekel, 2004)

Emotion is one of the irrational aspects that is built into people's physical senses with which it is possible to evaluate the environment and events surrounding one in life. Every physical space in my film has within it emotional aspects. Landscape, for instance, behaves as an organic body that mirrors the Prince's thoughts and moods. As this process reflects on the inner circumstances of the Prince, I have called the space within which that

process occurs emotional space. Within that space, nature can be supportive, guiding the Prince on his way, or it can reflect the Prince's fears and close in on him with its blackness and sharp imprisoning shapes. Nature can be huge, threatening to swallow the Prince with his horse, or it can be a small aesthetic background to the Prince who looks bigger in the frame. Similarly, the horse at times seems to be only a speck in the desert, and at other times the horse with its animal power is dominant, while

nature is lying conquered under its hooves. Such obvious shifts in hierarchy within the frame build up the emotional space within the film.

According to Gestalt theory (Zakia, 2002: 242-244), a change in the size of shapes confirms subliminal experiences that indicate a growing emotional state. Zakia (2002: 242) gives the example of a human pupil who will automatically change in size with strong emotional responses. Analogously, people project emotional power onto a change in size of any form. One may conclude from the observation of emotional space that the things of which people may be consciously unaware can influence them as much as those they are aware of and can see. That in



Image 51: Thoughts in metaphysical space in *The Truth*. (© Natalie Dekel, 2004)

turn brings up the idea of the existence of metaphysical space alongside emotional space. Metaphysical space turns even more inwardly to recognise a deeper level of non-physical existence of the forever unfolding interior creative realities, the externalisation of which is always an imperfect representation. For example, one may say that the external, physical journey of the Prince is the materialisation of his inner reality of

searching for meaning and understanding through self-reflexive analysis. Metaphysical space, in that sense, is created in the film when the viewer hears the Prince speak his thoughts out loud, when he is “thinking aloud”. The external adventure and its result are then used to direct and clarify aspects of an inner reality that need to be physically represented, such as the Prince’s fears and doubts. As the Prince’s thoughts spontaneously appear “aloud” and float among textures and shapes in the frame, it seems that the metaphysical space has become manifested in its more physical sense. The film receives a new kind of dimensional awareness as the Prince’s thoughts sound as if in the viewer’s own head, which in turn leads one to question one’s thoughts and beliefs. Such awareness enriches the space and the objects within it with unique individuality, giving them a new dimension of creative quality. This form of communication within the film elevates the characters to a new

level that enables them to glimpse their inner world. Their innerness is externalised while keeping its atmosphere and intensity. As such, everything that the Prince undergoes externally undergoes sacredness.

We have seen that there are certain principles according to which one can perceive a hierarchy of evolving spaces in the film. The qualities of emotional and metaphysical space are so subtle that they give the viewer a freedom of choice, whether s/he perceives it or not, and they therefore demand a critical, analytical effort for its perception. Acknowledgement of that type of space requires the viewer to be constantly active and self-aware of the process that s/he is undergoing.

7.1.4 Artistic space

Within the film exists yet another type of space, whose existence is so subtle that it is hard to be registered by a non-professional eye. I will call that space “artistic”, as it encompasses a pictorial space within the fabric of the drawing/image itself. Such space indicates the delicate balance existing between the external space of objects as a theme of a frame, and the internal space, which can be found within the technique of creating a spatial background.



Image 52: Artistic space in *The Truth*. (© Natalie Dekel, 2004)

During the process of creating images for the film I have carefully balanced the external spaces of contour lines and graphic shapes with the internal spaces within the shapes themselves. The “open” spaces, which have almost no colour and texture, had to collaborate with the “closed” spaces that are full of details and movement, for example, the space within the contour of the head as opposed to the space of the background behind the head. While observing the frames, one may digest ideas in the areas where large, featureless areas of space are left “to breathe”. One needs to be particularly sensitive

as to how to give these areas life, without letting them have so much internal structure that they fragment into little, visually disturbing areas. For example, when the Prince talks about the notion of Truth, the background behind him had to be “dim” enough not to attract attention but breathe enough to give a sense of air and distance.

In order to let the space breathe, no passage of space can be entirely uniform. Elkins (1999: 138) notes that “this is a skill nearly always unappreciated by non-painters and hardly ever missed by painters. Those who pay attention to such details will recognise that some of the frames that depict a field, a grass, a sky or a sea are as compelling as any portrait or a scene of a battle”. Zakia (2002: 5) quotes Escher, who explains that the border line between two adjacent shapes has a double function as “on either side of it, simultaneously a recognizability takes shape”. However, it is not only the conscious recognizability that raises a problematic issue within that space, but it is also the notion of an unconscious reaction to certain visual spaces by evoking negative or positive emotions in the viewer. These artistic spaces give the image its dynamic dimension and enrich its message with ambiguity and complexity. As any figure in the frame is seen against a background, the dynamic interaction between the figure as a shape and other shapes created in that background decide what becomes a message for the viewer and what loses its significance.

Learning to perceive the “artistic space” in an animation film depends on the experience of seeing the dynamic relationships between the various shapes in the frame. The more one observes them, the more it is possible to see, as this observation depends on professional skills, which in turn exercise one’s ability to explore the visual field. My personal experience suggests that it is possible to develop such a professional skill to the point where one can watch an animation film and see how many frames were used to portray a certain movement or a change. Being able to exercise such comprehension not only helps one to understand popular animational imagery better, but also to become a better observer of other faculties in everyday life.

It seems that the more “physical” the spaces are, the easier it is to recognise them, simply because they are enclosed by contours and are fixed by conventional

approach. However, despite the fact that more abstract spaces are less easy to recognise, they carry as much significance as the others. Those initially “unrecognisable” spaces convey a certain ambiguity, a confusion that make the animational frame become a visual riddle that remains unsolved during viewing. Zakia (2002: 58) argues that this unanswered riddle remains in memory and is recalled and thought about until it is solved and a closure is formed in the viewer’s mind. That process raises the viewer’s critical awareness of the perceived imagery in popular animation and is therefore part of a multidimensional animational approach. As part of that critical observation, the viewer becomes more aware of the visual origin of the animational event in the frame and the way it structures the narrative.

7.2 Contestation of visual origin of events laying foundation of narrative

The visual and the narrative in popular animation film constitute a dynamic matrix of network and collaboration. For instance, horizontally unfolding compositions support a linear unfolding of the narrative. Narrative involves both order and complexity, which are co-dependent and therefore create stimulating connections and richness in expression. It seems therefore that the emotional dynamics of the narrative stem from the visual dynamics of its formal characteristics.

In live imagery, detailed pieces of information are combined so that every image has a separate story and the viewers combine all the stories in their own mind. Thus, for instance, when one watches a live image of a chair it is already a story existing before the chair has received an additional role in the film. In animation, however, the story of line is created at the moment of the film’s production. It has no previous existence. Drawn line images communicate by their sequence rather than by one detail, by their simplicity. The combination of lines and their dynamic relationships create the story.

In my film, the narrative flows through the depicted movement as opposed to the industrial fragmentation in popular binary animation. Not only the frames themselves move in the film, but there are also visual dynamics in every frame that add to the sense of movement. Every single combination of forms, even if they are figurative, awakens a feeling of movement, which is mainly abstract, being emotional and experiential. With a simple combination of shapes one can feel different textures, such as sharp and exploding ones, liquid and viscous ones, the weight of the object and so on. The visual dynamics of the shapes create an emotional dynamics even without the use of colour and texture. Thus, for instance, when the Prince is seen to be afraid of the decision to be made regarding his going to the warm countries, he is depicted as being imprisoned by trees. The space around



Image 53: Emotional dynamic composition in *The Truth*. (© Natalie Dekel, 2004)

the Prince appears triangular, thus holding the Prince hostage. The attacking, sharp shapes of black trees seem to close in on the Prince, whose vertical pose is very erect and vulnerable and flinching. I have noticed that all of the compositions in the film involve geometrical forms within them to a certain extent. The relationships between these shapes create emotional, dynamic events.

Although that observation was made as an afterthought, even during the film's production I was conscious to some degree of the use of geometric forms within the film's compositions. Yet, after observing the film as a complete unit, I saw their importance and effect on the narrative. Initially I worked intuitively with the arrangement of shapes within the frames, and only later did I analyse it intellectually.

Elkins (1999) notes that the ancient Greeks discussed certain imagery and its compositions in relation to the four elements of nature. Accordingly, I adjusted elements from my film to see how they corresponded to natural elements of materiality and emotion that in turn affect the flow of the film’s narrative:

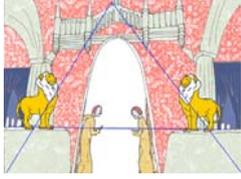
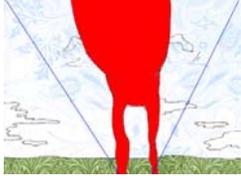
| | | |
|---|--|---|
|  | <p>Fire (desire to know, fear, strong emotions)</p> |  |
|  | <p>Air (atmosphere, background spirit)</p> |  |
|  | <p>Water (fluidity, openness, sharing and expanding one’s understanding)</p> |  |
|  | <p>Earth (connection to basic needs, to life as process)</p> |  |
|  | <p>Harmony/balance/perfection (giving and receiving)</p> |  |

Figure 7.1 Identification of natural elements in relation to composition, materiality and emotion in my practice (7.2.1)

The four elements of physical existence are water, earth, air and fire. In many cultural beliefs, water has a purifying effect. By undertaking a journey through cold

lands (snow as frozen water), oceans and waterfalls, the Prince understands and contemplates what he actually has learned on his journey. The desert, the fire of the sand and the heat had been the beginning of his understanding the Truth. Water had given the Truth its proportions in relation to previous experiences. Earth and Air were the constant accompaniment to the Prince's journey, his supporters when he was afraid or happy. My film therefore encompasses the "physical" aspects of the actual compositions and the "spiritual" effect of those on the general climate of the film through the visual, dynamic arrangement of its formal characteristics.

Traditionally, a narrative is developed in a linear form, whereas my narrative has also circular connotations that affect the dynamic relationships between the film's elements. The story results in being circular since the Prince is sent by the King to discover the Truth, which then makes him a King and this King will then send his son and so on. This circularity is presented by the use of the castle as a main axis of the character's development. The story starts and finishes with the castle. Within the circular moves of the story there are different repetitions and variations of the subject, thus the subject revolves but also evolves. Here is a list of the repetitions and variations in the film that affect its visual dynamics:

Repetitions:

1. Prince's visit – the question and the answer to/of others.
2. The forest – a space in which the Prince sorts out his new understanding, plucking out his weeding thoughts about the truth of the every day life.
3. The candle – the light of wisdom.
4. The broad landscape – a space in which the Prince travels inwardly to discover his quest.
5. The offer to share bread and its acceptance by others.

Variations:

1. The initial visit to warm and then to cold lands presents two different perceptions, which is enough in my opinion to show the relativity of the expression of Truth.
2. Initially the forest is presented as a frightening place, attacking the Prince with its blackness and voidness. However, later on the forest is shown with a warmth of flowers and welcoming greenery and softness.
3. The candle first acts as a narrator, then as a source of wisdom, then it supplies the Prince with a horse, gives the horse its vitality, and finally welcomes the Prince back into the Castle.
4. The landscape is both fields (to investigate), mountains (to conquer), rivers (to overcome), and waterfalls (to stop the quest). The last stage led the Prince to realise the essence of the journey and to come home.
5. Breaking of the bread is a circulation of ideas on Truth, each time experiencing the taste and the meaning of Truth differently, anew.

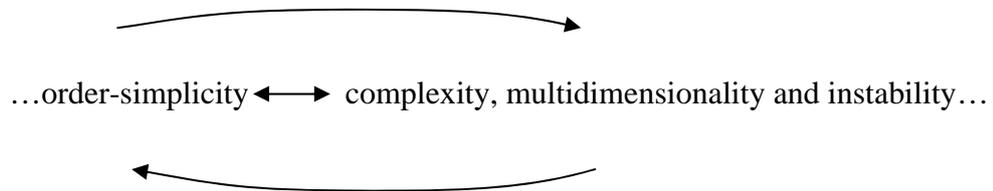
The repetitions and the variations within the narrative indicate the constant duality within its circular quality. Duality enables one to experience relativity in order to understand better the meaning and the significance of each component.

The visual representation gives additional meanings to the film's narrative. Throughout the film, the arrangement of formal characteristics and the relationships between them work to support the dynamics between the external representation of the characters and the internal representation of their emotional state. Due to the complexity within the animational appearances, there is a degree of order that enables it to be both linear and non-linear at the same time – linear in its progression of the popular narrative and the visual dynamics, yet circular, i.e., non-linear, in terms of feedback from different stages of that process of development.

7.3 Summary

This chapter defines several types of space within the animational frame that evolve one from another and constitute a completely autonomous language within the film's structure. The spaces observed in the film evolve from "physical" spaces to abstract ones, and therefore underline the complexity of popular animation as seen in my practice. Despite the fact that my observation of these visual dynamics is derived from personal practice, a critical analysis can now be structured of how an animational event originates visually in the frame and structures the narrative through the arrangement of its formal characteristics.

Interactions among the film's components generate unexpected qualities that exist both in popular animational practice and my own personal practice that can be characterised by a phased transition from the highly ordered, somewhat simple order of narrative and representation to the unstable, complex, multidimensional, critical dynamics of its representation. The two phases are interdependent and evolve symbiotically:



This account of complexity of popular animational practice as seen through my practice suggests, therefore, an analysis of how reality or the ordered account of things is perceived through popular animation. The next step is then to observe how the animator emotionally and physically embodies reality in his or her practice, and then to analyse how it is expressed in the concept behind the animation film.

Chapter 8:

Reconstruction of Subjectivity and Dynamic Complexity in Production of my Animation Film

An animator can be defined as a person on the edge between the orderly, externalised and simplified perception of reality and the chaotic, emotional and complex inner observation of that reality. At that stage, Taylor (2001: 146) argues, the most complex and multidimensional behaviour occurs, orderly enough to be stable yet flexible and intuitive. The animator therefore undergoes an inner process of analysis and digestion of information and then externalising that information into the film.

We have seen that the animator reconstructs the simplest obvious actions and decodes them anew in the film. Clearly, that search to understand the simplest of human actions requires first of all to perceive and understand how an animator him/herself moves, perceives and expresses. That decision requires one to step outside of oneself and attempt to observe the creative process of animating as “objectively” as possible. Section 8.1 therefore explores the way the animator becomes aware of his/her subjective beliefs. Section 8.2 observes that most narratives and concepts in popular animation are structured on the basis of the animator’s observation of his/her inner reality, which in turn creates the concept behind the film’s structure. Section 8.3 explains how popular animation manipulates this knowledge and understanding to its commercial and industrial purposes, and derives its visual dynamics from that.

8.1 Choice of animational detail as embodiment of animator’s beliefs and concepts

Being an animator means being a vigilant observer of the world of personality and its context. Such observation, however, requires self-reflexive, creative awareness and understanding of the several levels at which I have created the film: physical, emotional and intellectual. Some of these levels of awareness were born

during the filmmaking itself, some were logically and intellectually planned beforehand and some were conceived of as an afterthought. Nevertheless, all of them bear the influence of a multidimensional approach in popular animation. In that approach, Taylor (2001: 66) claims that meaning and value have lost their referential moorings and are set free. Clearly, the search for 'the Truth' as a central issue in my film relates to that approach. The main reference upon which I insist in my practice is the subjective guidance of critical self-observation, which is seen in the nuances of the facial expressions of the characters and the characteristics of their expression in my film.

As I see it, the main issue for the popular animator is to observe the inner and outer world and to reflect on it through motion and imagery. Taylor (2001: 88) raises a paradox that on the one hand, if an observer remains outside the system, it is not clear whether knowledge of its inner workings is possible. On the other hand, if the observer is part of the system, self-observation leads to an infinite regress that makes complete knowledge of the system impossible. However, I believe that animators of popular multidimensional animation succeed in both being the observer and the observee, the system itself, and therefore solve the paradox. The animator is not external to the system, yet his/her purpose is to reflect on what occurs outside of that system. So, while popular animation films observe external reality, what they depict is being observed by an animator who creates them.

My practice explores the notion of the animator's self-reflexivity and critical awareness. The whole narrative deals with the issue of the Prince observing himself at the same time as the viewer is observing him. Every event that the Prince encounters on his way is a turning point at the level of that self-reflexivity. However, there is one event that seems to appear illogical and disconnected narratively from the main flow, which is the scene portraying the animal life of the bears towards the last part of Prince's journey. Yet, even that event has a meaning, since it symbolises a natural element of self-discovery and awareness during the search for the Truth. When the Prince sets off on his journey, he is eager to achieve results, he is desperate for his quest; he is focused only on what he wants to achieve. However, he encounters contradictory information, which appears to be subjective and context-

related rather than objective. Thus, a gradual realisation of the importance of the process of the journey is aroused. Gradually, the Prince begins to enjoy his search, becomes relaxed as he is looking around to see for himself and by himself where the Truth can be found. Suddenly he is aware not only of himself searching, but of the animals and the plants around him, who might be the answer to his question. Hence, towards the end of the film, there seems to be more space but also details of other characters, their life, and the observation of other realities. It is only then that the Prince slows down enough to realise that the truth has always been within him and not outside of him.

The external appearance of animals and their lives projects the inner realisation of multitude of various ways of life and acceptance of those as equal to yours even if different. During the film I have used the depiction of animals as an expression of the journey itself. The horse, for example, which has risen from the candlelight, expresses a storm-like, erupting spirit, which does not know quietness and is the representation of the external “physical” journey. It seems that the horse itself participates in the Prince’s decisions and has a general influence on the journey. Other animals, such as the bears, act as symbols of the journey within that portray the significance of the subjective experience, whereas a fish at the end of the Prince’s journey when he returns back home, represents the quiet, mindful insights that he has gained throughout his whole experience.

Throughout the film there is a message that underlies the whole narrative and that can be sensed rather than heard as it is not spoken aloud. Wiserman and Groves (1997: 71) explain that works of art “talk to us” through our senses. If a lake in a painting evokes stillness, it is not because it symbolises stillness or even “represents” it. Stillness is there, immanent in the image of the lake. My film preserves that logic by asking to turn the viewer’s attention inwardly to perceive the meanings in the images through the nuances of facial and other bodily expressions.

Animators decode observed reality into a language of signs that in some ways distances the viewer from a feeling of “real” objective experience, while focusing instead on an inner “subjective” experience. That is very characteristic of the multi-dimensional approach not only in my film but in popular commercial animation as

well, in which what is objective and subjective are undermined by portraying the notion of “real” as context-related and changeable. Popular animational practice focuses its modes of representation and narrative around the observation of subjective feelings and thoughts that establish popular animation as a critical medium.

8.2 Animator’s beliefs as structuring concepts behind narrative and representation

Paradoxically, despite the fact that an animator observes reality through subjective, fluid experiences, the actual process of popular animation filmmaking requires a structure that is based on an intellectual search for order and meaning. Film production initially requires the conceptualisation of the core narrative statement. In order to produce a concept, an animator needs to analyse critically his/her personal beliefs, simply to know what is it that s/he wants to communicate to the viewers. The commercial framework within which popular animation works requires clarity of intent and a certain simplicity to be communicated in a limited time and on a limited budget. The popular animational narrative therefore is based on a concept that implies a rational and comprehensive interpretation of events. Sometimes, narration is introduced to clarify the core message of the film, while at the same time directly representing the animator’s beliefs.

8.2.1 Representational mode requiring identification and critical analysis of personal beliefs

To create any artefact means to contemplate initially the ideas and concepts behind it. Whether the artist is conscious of it or not, the actual fact that s/he is the one who creates the artefact will lead to his/her personal beliefs becoming embodied in it as it is the artist’s personal thoughts and skills that contribute to its creation. Since anyone’s personal beliefs are related to their time and space, and are subject to social conditioning, people’s beliefs can and do change. That is why I believe it is important to be critically aware of what it is that one believes in so that the choices

one makes are based on knowledge rather than made in ignorance. My practice reflects that view by observing the process of self-awareness.

I started my research with a strong binary belief that there is only one authentic truth that must be embodied in every action, no matter how different it seems to be. I strongly believed that this authentic truth had to be found and shown to others. This belief was cultivated in me by the cultural, national and religious concepts, which shaped me as a teenager. However, the more I researched the matter, the more I realised the significance of individual, subjective, experiential knowledge. Living in a different country, different culture, observing my own life from within and without and relating the changes in me to the changes that occurred in those I had left behind, gradually raised my self-consciousness. In a way, the film's concept of a journey reflects my own subjective experience of becoming a self-reflexive observer. The concept of the open-ended journey in the film aims to observe and reflect on the observed rather than actually reach a certain specific physical destination. Obviously such a fluid, open-ended adventure overturns the binary animational adventures that had a fixed narrative and conceptual system.

Watching many other popular animation films might lead people to presume that in my film the Prince will also be successful in his quest in terms of actually physically finding the specific thing that he is searching for. However, my film leaves a place for confusion and doubt by breaking the predictability of the genre and returning the Prince with nothing physical. The confusion is increased when the character of the Prince, which is perceived throughout the film as the main character who goes on his quest and undergoes all sorts of difficulties, is actually not the one who has all the answers. The old fragile King is also a protagonist and he does know the answer to the quest already at the beginning of the film. He simply enables the Prince to discover it for himself, by his own experience. Once again, the expectation is broken and youth is subject to domination by the wisdom of the old.

In the film I have interwoven European folklore with Far Eastern influences on the symbols of the sun, various patterns and the notion of contemplation. This mix of cultural symbols opens up for a viewer a way to perceive events on an individual level rather than on cultural or national level. Therefore, the film emphasises even

more the contemporary intercultural global approach. My film combines the conceptual and the perceptual arts. Conceptual art is found in Eastern approaches, which are closer to words and depict contemplation as can be seen in illustrated Haiku poetry for example and sumi-e paintings. Western perceptual art, on the contrary, depicts aesthetically pleasant images that can be called 'Perceptual art', such as Matisse's paintings that he described as paintings that are to be watched while sitting on the sofa. Perceptual art is characterised by the pure act of observation, which is often criticised in post-modern society as a voyeuristic experience with commercial connotations (Baudrillard, 1999: 23; Virilio, 1994: 14). However, I believe that to observe is to contemplate, an act that we carry out from our first hours of infancy. Hence, every word used in my film, every image expresses the observation of the inner journey. Constant self-observation left my film open to new ideas till the end of the production process, which meant that at times I would erase whole scenes, or dozens of frames, and add new ones, or completely change the narrative in some parts of the film, as will be explained in chapter 9.

8.2.2 Popular animational narrative as conceptual reconstruction of experience

In order to make a good animation film, you need to remember all the things as you experienced them the first time and apply them each time anew. Remember the first time you saw snow? Or squeezed sand between your toes? Or felt rain on your face? How do you walk? How does your body change when you breathe? How does a horse move? How does a king walk as opposed to a servant? Which organs do you feel more when you stand? All these issues need to be addressed when animating a character.

My film belongs to the genre of story telling. It is an allegory with symbolism and a symptomatic interpretation of events, which reconstructs the simplest obvious actions anew. Even the simple action of shaking one's hand needs to be re-examined as people often are not aware of the million small acts which make up this seemingly insignificant action. Nevertheless, they exist. Whereas people perceive them in their

completed fashion as one unit, as an animator I take the movement apart and consciously reconstruct it in a new way. That reconstruction stems from my desire to understand the movement and to project what I have understood to the viewer. That is why, in order to explain, I divide any simple action into seconds, every second into 12 frames and every frame will be shot twice in order to enable the viewer's eye to perceive the image in its wholeness since only a particular speed with which an image appears before the eyes enables the organ of sight physically to perceive it.

The actual act of observation and reconstruction raises one's awareness of the complexity within the overall simplicity that people perceive. Hence, every act of movement in popular animation has to start from scratch, resulting in complete uniqueness of movement, timing and expression. Apparently, animating a movement creates a conflict between the animator, his/her mind, and the idea or the product s/he wants to present to people. Elkins (1999: 18) explains that the body of the artist wants predictable movement. Therefore, an animator needs to re-enact every single movement and study it in order to make it normal or predictable. Yet the creative mind wants the unpredictable, the expressive, the new, the unique – and that is where popular animation comes in with its exaggeration and even the slightest changes. Nevertheless, whether the motion is exaggerated or not, an animator has to know how every single action is performed, whether it is the blink of an eye or walking. Only then can an animator recreate the action on paper in a way that has continuity of logic, narrative and appearance. That is why in my film I focus on portraying a naturalistic technique of movement, which requires a thorough understanding and implementation of movement, as opposed to a fragmented and stylised movement. Continuous movement creates a flow of storytelling, of emotions and impressions of life. It breaks the graphicity and bluntness of its appearance and blends it into a perceptual reality in which the narrative flows.

Reflection on my filmmaking process shows how an animator is conscious of every single element within a film. That in turn takes me back to my theoretical analysis, to my claim that there is no film without a storyteller being embodied in the personal interpretation of a film as well as in associated merchandise. The personal beliefs of the animator underlie every act in the animation process.

8.2.3 Narration in film as critical reconstruction of knowledge representing animator's beliefs

Whereas in the past my practice was focused mostly on physical goals and objects of desire, now it is focused on the process, the journey itself, which has become important rather than the actual result of that process. The narrative of my film clearly reflects that view by using two types of narration: One is the internal narration that portrays the inner personal change, and the other is the external narration that portrays the external physical and environmental change.

Bordwell and Thompson (2001: 59) argue that most of communication in contemporary society that people are directly familiar with has a narrative. Through narrative we make sense of the things that we perceive. In order to clarify the narrative told in my film, I have used a restricted narration in my film *The Truth* so that the viewer learns and knows as much as the character himself. As opposed to an omniscient narration where the viewer knows more than all the characters taken together as a group, the restricted narrative concentrates on individual human experience and personal growth. By limiting the viewer to the information known to the character, the film may evoke surprise and curiosity and engage the viewer's interest. Such confining of a plot to a particular range of knowledge realistically motivates the concealing of other story information. The plot in *The Truth* begins as an objective experience, which gradually plunges deep into the psychological, subjective states of its characters.

The subjective character's state acts as an "internal" narration in the film that portrays the central characters explaining aloud their fears, doubts and hopes. The internal narration can be clearly seen when the Prince talks to himself aloud, for the viewer to hear his thoughts. Albus (2000: 109) observes that

the world can only be grasped from one's own position. Every spiritual being has its centre within itself. And its participation in the divine consists precisely in this centring. Individuality is not simply a limitation; rather it represents a particular value that may not be eliminated or extinguished. Only through that we can perceive life.

That understanding of the unique and the individual brought me to portray the inner narration provided by the Prince as conscious rethinking and reconstructing of perceived knowledge. The whole idea of inner narration is one of soul-searching and it gives the viewer a reliable feeling as if coming from the viewer himself, for example, when the Prince shares his most intimate thoughts. The journey of the Prince is so intimate and quiet that it could actually have happened in anyone's mind. A light has been lit up as if it were the inside of the viewer that had become a stage, and the show of each viewer had begun together with the Prince. The inner becomes externalised. The graveyard of the Prince's thoughts becomes exposed and uncovered. The viewer will then be able to follow the character, as s/he knows what the character knows, discovers what the character discovers. In a way, the viewer may become the character and actively participate in the film.

Alongside an inner narration, I have also used an external narration that follows the narrative development. In that narration, there is no spontaneity or individuality as the anonymous voice shares pieces of information with the viewer only when that narrator feels that it is appropriate to do so. It is interesting that I have used a non-character type of narration in the film, something that is often used in documentary style films as well as in folktales. The viewer never learns who is the "owner" of the anonymous voice of the external commentator that binds the story into one unit of meaning to achieve coherency of plot. The intention of the external narration is to provide a framework within which the story is told in order to distance the intimate story of the Prince from the viewer somewhat so as to enable the viewer to decide for him/herself what is the intention of the film.

The narrative on the one hand is circular in terms of the King sending his son on a journey to become a King – in a way the film is never-ending because there is no end to the process of changing, of getting wiser and becoming more aware. However, at the same time, despite that circular development, the narration of the film is evolving linearly. The viewer gets a "kick-start" with the external, narrational explanation at the beginning, but at the end the viewer can summarise and analyse the process of the journey by him/herself. There is no more need in the intermediary. Similar to the characters that achieve their personal, individual solutions, the viewer

can choose what to think / believe the film to mean. Consequently, my film uses narration to question fixed perceptions of knowledge by focusing on the self-exploration of personal decisions, views and beliefs. The narrational change from “objective”, fixed knowledge to the individual and personal speaks about the self-reflexive, multidimensional, critical process in my practice.

The analysis of my film portrays popular animation as a structure that combines concepts and perceptions. The conceptual aspect is more intellectual and contemplative, while the perceptual is characterised mainly by emotional observation. The self-conscious aspect of my characters gives the popular issue of the “successful young protagonist” a new outlook, which reflects back on my discussion of a young character in Part One of the thesis. My film suggests that undertaking a successful adventure does not necessarily mean to bring home treasures, but instead to realise the value of the treasure one holds in one’s heart. So, as opposed to binary popular films that mostly take an external approach, I turn the viewer’s attention inward. By combining both experimental and popular approaches, my film reaches a new level in popular animation, at which deeper critical issues emerge.

8.3 Summary

Consciousness and self-consciousness bring out the reflexive position of being an observer, which my practice uses to represent its concepts. Each such observation is unique and subject to each individual experience and knowledge of each animator. That observation, filtered through the animator’s beliefs, shape the core argument of the narrative structure and representation in the film. As these beliefs are coming from the inner, subjective world of an animator while observing actual reality, they might appear as “unreal” or distant from “objective” experience. Yet what is real is often so only by cultural and social definition (Taylor, 2001: 89). Hence, the animator’s observation of reality makes the experience real as much as other cognitive modes of cinematic representation.

This chapter has identified the critical analysis of my practice as a network of subjective experiences. The role of the animator as author, and its significance in animational practice, have been re-examined to give hope and opportunity to the animators of popular commercial animational film. The analysis of my personal practice suggests a framework of self-reflexive practice within which an animator can develop popular animational narratives and representation beyond the previous system of appearances and beliefs by leaving it open-ended, flexible and critical. The “inner”, reflexive structure of personal practice can be clearly identified through the analysis of its formal characteristics. However, to understand how that practice could be accommodated within a popular industrial framework, one needs to analyse a film’s structure as related to the units that “externally” bind popular film together through its cinematic, industrial characteristics.

Chapter 9:

Recognition of Cinematic Characteristics within Popular Animational Framework

As opposed to experimental animation, whose categorisation as an art form opens the doors to a critical structural analysis of the technique and structure of film, popular commercial animation has been largely ignored in critical film analysis. That, in turn, has led to an inability to ascertain the condition of popular animation with regards to its cinematic and artistic state due to a lack of information. Like cinema, popular animation is a system governed by definable concepts that are completely deterministic. However, being left theoretically and critically on its own, popular animational practice has become a self-organising system that mixes and adjusts elements from other systems, such as cinema, art and literature.

This chapter analyses the filmic structure of popular animation, using the terms of Bordwell and Thompson's (2001) overview of film structure and the art of filmmaking. Although Bordwell and Thompson's work pertains mainly to live-action film, animation films can be analysed using the same cinematic structure. This chapter, therefore, establishes some cinematic notions for animation film that will clarify our understanding of how ideological structures, which were recognised above in Part One of the thesis, operate. This cinematic analysis is performed on my personal practice. The critical investigation therefore relates the self-reflexive, personal exploration of representation with critical observations of the popular animation film industry.

Whereas the formal characteristics of popular animation film are elements of the inner core statement within each frame, the cinematic characteristics of popular animation films are the external elements that bind scenes together in the process of filmmaking, such as angles of view, light and narrative. They create the outer sense of the film's flow of meaning as seen by the viewer. Despite similar aspects of analysis such as time, space and movement, the meaning of the analysis of those elements is different. Furthermore, in popular animation the central cinematic term "mise-en-scène", a French term meaning "putting into the scene" and which is used

to signify a director's control over film's appearance, includes both the formal, inner characteristics of every frame and their external, cinematic arrangement. This is the case simply because these two types of characteristic qualities in two-dimensional popular animation are actually the same thing. Since this aspect of popular animation has already been discussed in Chapters 4, 5 in Part One and chapters 6, 7 in Part Two, it will not be discussed again here. However, I aim to discuss the editing processes and formulations of meaning within the general flow of the film, which are aspects of filmmaking that are often disregarded in critiques of popular animational film. Section 9.1 will therefore show how in popular animational filmmaking editing provides for a critical revision and analysis of every frame and scene in the film and of their interrelations. In turn, Section 9.2 observes that when popular animational film is recognised as a cinematic art form, it is likely to be tested by the viewers for its larger significance.

9.1 Editing as analysis and revision of frames & scenes and their interrelations

Since the 1920s, when film theorists, such as Eisenstein and Pudovkin, realised what editing can achieve, it has been a widely discussed film technique, as for example Reisz K. and Millar G. (2002), and Bordwell and Thompson's (2001) argue. However, in popular animation, because of a lack of academic critique, the matter of editing and its importance have remained little discussed. Inasmuch as animation filmmaking involves total control over every frame and scene, it is essential to analyse how they are revised and edited in terms of timing and their position in relation to each other and to the whole film. Due to requirements imposed by commercial broadcasting, popular animation films were forced to be quicker and shorter and often repetitive so viewers could follow their plots despite interruptions on technical and commercial grounds. These limitations led to a particular style of editing and filmic appearance. This section discusses the spatial, rhythmic, temporal and graphic relations between the shots, drawing on Bordwell and Thompson's (2001: 251) discussion of the four types of choice and control a filmmaker has over the editing of his/her film.

9.1.1 Spatial relations

Spatial relations in a film talk about spaces, showing the scenery and the location in which the action takes place. In my film I have chosen to begin the narrative with a candle on an almost abstract background, which does not convey information regarding the location of the action. However, later on I zoom out from the candle and show that this candle stands in the window frame of a castle in which the Prince and the King live. In that way, through editing, new spatial relationships are constructed that enhance the narrative.

Technical effects are often used to create continuity between different, seemingly unrelated shots of locations or to introduce new locations, such as “fade-out” or “dissolve”, where one shot gradually fades out or dissolves into another; “crops” and “close-ups” are other effects which can be made later on as well. For example, when initially drawing my own film, I depicted a servant talking to the Prince through the doorway in a long shot distanced from above. However, the proportions did not seem to appear right when the film was edited, therefore I decided to crop the frames one by one and create a “camera zoom” from behind the head of the servant so the viewer seems to look over the servant’s shoulder at the Prince. This adaptation has created a much more interesting narrative beginning to arouse the viewer’s interest, who seems to peep together with the camera onto the Prince and his environment.

As opposed to a live-action filmmaker, who positions a few cameras shooting the same footage and then chooses the best, an animator draws the camera angles once he has a well-planned narrative. However, changes and shifts are inevitable during the final editing when the full sequence is seen. These changes often involve the most common means of joining two shots, i.e., with a “cut”. The term “cut” is a hang-over from the tape production process and is used in computer editing programs as well. Although it seems that a cut is an easy solution for joining two separate shots, it still demands a continuity of thought in the scenes before and after the cut. For example, if in my film I depict a servant walking up the corridor, shot from a distance, then it is possible to cut the scene after a short while and immediately afterwards show a close-up of a servant’s head, the servant talking to

the Prince. Although the scenes appear visually different, given the fact that the viewer will recognise the costume and appearance of the servant from a distance, the viewer will be able to recognise the servant in a close-up as well. As a result, the narrative is continuous. Although in the first instance it seems confusing, the contemporary viewer has become accustomed by now to reading these cues related to time and space. Breaking the continuity of a shot may stretch time, reduce space and allow the viewer to be involved in the narrative.

A “shot” in filmmaking is a continuous length of film taken without stopping or cutting, comprising one or more frames. The film editor eliminates unwanted footage, usually by discarding all but the best take. The editor then joins the desired shots, the end of one to the beginning of another and adjusts them to make the best, most appealing film sequence, even if that sometimes changes the originally planned narrative. The edited frames then are adjusted to the soundtrack and the timing of the film, which concerns the “rhythmic relationships” discussed in the following section.

9.1.2 Rhythmic and temporal relations

Rhythmic relations occur during editing when the length of shot is adjusted in relation to one another in terms of time. Each shot has a certain length, measured in frames. The shot’s length corresponds to a measurable duration on-screen of a physical action. A shot can be as short as a single frame, or it may be hundreds or thousands of frames long, running for many minutes when projected. Editing thus allows the editor to determine the duration of each shot as well as the continuity of an action.

An example of rhythmic relations in my film would be the movement of a horse galloping. Since I wanted my film to be around 5-6 minutes, a few seconds was all I had to show the galloping horse. I then acted out and measured the time to show enough of the movement in order to make it recognisable. Then I calculated the amount of in-between frames that needed to be drawn to match the timing of the scene. However, during the drawing process, I saw that more in-between frames were needed to create a fluent and continuous movement that was not jerky rather than the initially planned number of frames. That decision slowed the movement,

and I therefore had to alter the duration of this particular scene and make it faster on the computer (using editing software called *Adobe Premier*). The rhythmic possibilities thus enable the editor to achieve an overall tempo in the film and to create unity and balance between the scenes.

Another way of creating a rhythmical link between various scenes is to use the metamorphic technique that is unique to the animation medium. Metamorphosis is the ability for an image to literally change into another completely different image, which enables one to animate a fluid linkage of images without using editing – although, of course, editing may also be employed in the same film. Connecting seemingly different images in the editing process, both pictorially and temporally, is called creating “graphic relationships”. In those relationships, any two shots can be edited together through similarities and differences of their purely pictorial qualities. However, I believe that my analysis of the formal characteristics and their arrangement in film, as discussed in Part Two, is in agreement with the analysis of live-action cinema, and therefore I will not discuss that aspect further here. However, it is interesting that the metamorphic animation technique enables one not only to correlate the graphic relations between the frames but also temporal and rhythmic relations. Computer software enables an editor to metamorph between two completely different images by dissolving one image into another. Thus it is possible to adjust the duration of the film both at the level of individual frames (rhythmic relations) and at the level of the overall action (temporal relations). Metamorphosis in animation adds a dimension to the visual language of the animated film by defining the fluid, abstract stage between the fixed properties of the images before and after the transition. Metamorphosis also legitimises the process of connecting apparently unrelated images, forging original relationships between lines and objects, and disrupting established notions of linear, classical story telling of an event leading logically to another event, by adding an associative, intuitive, emotional quality. Thus, for instance, in my film the story is told through a candle which metamorphs into a castle and at other times into a horse. Metamorphosis conveys information in a new way that other vehicles of communication cannot illustrate. The different stages of these metamorphoses enrich the film.

The metamorphic technique raises the issue of controlling the time of the action or the “temporal relations” in film editing, as performed by an animator. In film editing there is the narrative time of events, but there is also an overall filmic time sequence. The film can start at the end and proceed to the beginning, and it can do so in flashbacks. It is through its temporal relations that the time of the action portrayed in a film is controlled. Film editing usually contributes to a plot’s manipulation of story time, which is the order of presentation of events. But it is also possible to change the position of shots and thus rearrange time, as is done in my film, for example. The Prince is called to the King, and the King starts talking to the Prince about his journey; however, the Prince is then shown already on his journey while the King is still guiding and advising him. It seems then that there is an overlapping of time sequences, one when the King is talking to the Prince and another when the Prince has already moved on. Yet because of the overlapping, the viewer presumably will assume that what he hears on the voice-over in the soundtrack is probably the Prince’s own reflection on what actually has happened, a kind of memory or a flashback. The editing of a film enables a state of narrative equilibrium to be achieved to clarify the flow of the general story.

The editing of temporal and rhythmic relations between scenes enables a reversible presentation of a natural, usually irreversible flow of events in popular animation, such as through flashbacks and flashforwards. Popular animation can uniquely edit rhythmically and temporally the events in its narrative flow by using metamorphosis, which is also used as a graphic linkage between different / contradictory images.

Editing is an art in story telling that enriches the basic narrative (Furniss, 1999: 149). Making a film is not enough. It is what you do with the drawn and computer-generated material later on that makes it into a great film, or an ordinary or even a boring one. A film typically contains around a thousand shots; a film centring on a rapid action can have two thousand or more (Bordwell and Thompson, 2001: 249). This fact alone suggests the significance of the process of editing those frames and shots to communicate the film’s message. The editing of a popular animation film therefore structures a platform for the dissemination of profound meanings.

9.2 Popular animation film as cinematic artwork and its implications for narrative structure

Understanding meaning in popular animation becomes significant even more once we have seen that editing creates meanings in popular animational narratives by the manipulation and arrangement of its formal and cinematic characteristics. That observation strengthens the analysis presented in Part One, which argued that popular animational narrative and representation reflect social and cultural realities. Here again I employ Bordwell and Thompson's (2001) structure for cinematic analysis to explore four types of meaning within my personal practice, which in turn implies a similar structure in any popular animation film. The types of meaning explored in my film range from the meaning of its plot, to its specific genre and style to the meaning that situates the film within contemporary thought.

Meaning emerges from one's a-priori forms of intuition and categories of understanding, Kant says (Taylor, 2001: 204). Despite originating in the mind of an individual, meaning is part of a larger psychosocial structure that constantly changes and adapts itself to social changes (Taylor, 2001: 204). Every single act of observation rekindles a critical thought that creates meanings behind that observation. The dynamic brain activity never ceases, and therefore it is important to observe what central, generalised types of meaning can be triggered in a viewer when s/he observes a popular animation film.

I propose to analyse the following four types of meanings as seen through my personal practice, while using Bordwell and Thompson's (2001) structure for cinematic analysis:

1. Referential meaning

This is the very concrete, almost literal meaning of the plot. That type of meaning refers to its style and genre, which often have already a built-in meaning. For example, my film is in the style of popular narrative animation, specifically in the genre of adventure films. The following meaning may therefore be acknowledged: In an unknown country, in an unknown time

(“Once upon a time...”), a Prince sets out from his home to travel around the world. After a series of adventures, he returns home. The recognition of the pattern of adventure, the leading prototype and the narrative unfolding act like symbols that activate certain structures that persist in all the films with similar narratives, which are related to their context in time and place as well as in social framework. Once the viewer has identified that level of meaning, another level of meaning unfolds, in which explicit meanings emerge which are less “physically” oriented towards time, place and society, and more psychologically centred.

2. Explicit meaning

This is an openly asserted meaning that is the main conceptual point of the film. It is developed from the overall structure of the sequence of events and rises above the physical observation of the actual narrative development, for instance, a search for the meaning of needing to undertake an adventure in the first place. The suggested explicit meaning can be, for example, that a young man dreams about understanding the meaning of life. Only after he leaves home does he realise how many blessings he already has in his life, and appreciates anew his home, relationships and environment. The explicit meaning gives the home-like an unfamiliar weight. The search for adventures “out there” and the risks associated with it are juxtaposed with the comfort, and in the case of my film’s narrative, understanding and acceptance found at home. That type of meaning draws attention to various units in the film, whose interrelationships need to be examined in order to clarify their general meaning. The explicit meaning of the film with its strong psychological undertones demands further analysis of the very psychology that drives the narrative, discussed below as the film’s “implicit meanings”.

3. Implicit meaning

This is a more abstract meaning than the referential and explicit meanings discussed above. The meaning is implicit since here the viewer applies his/her interpretation of the meaning of the film. Clearly, interpretations are likely to vary. However, the abstract nature of implicit meanings can lead to very broad

concepts being identified to underlie the film. For example, my film can be interpreted as a story in which an adolescent, who must soon face the adult world, yearns for a return to the simple world of nature, but eventually accepts his position as an adult with all its demands. In other words, the viewer presumably continuously screens the perceived information until a more subjective, deeper form of analysis takes shape. This type of meaning in turn raises even more abstract levels of meaning, in which the social patterns are revealed that govern the stream of cognition behind the narrative, referred to as “symptomatic meaning”.

4. Symptomatic meaning

Like implicit meaning, symptomatic meaning is abstract and general. It situates the film within thinking that is characteristic of contemporary society. It treats the explicit meaning of a film as the manifestation of a wider set of values that are characteristic of the whole society. The symptomatic meaning reminds us that any meaning is largely a social phenomenon. In relation to my film, for example, I would argue that in a society where everything is measured by dogmatic, predetermined definitions and explanations, the individual, nature and openmindedness seem to be the main refuge of human values and growth. That type of meaning acknowledges the relationships between the patterns in the film and the social and cultural environment that have led to its creation. The concept of a symptomatic meaning does not merely suggest a meaning that is reactive to that environment, but co-adaptive meanings that involve constant exchange of information in the film that reflects on information that has been translated from the social environment into the film and back to the viewer by an animator. Bordwell and Thompson (2001) argue that many meanings of a film are ultimately ideological since they spring from culturally-specific beliefs about the world. Such beliefs are historically and socially shaped views that are contextualised in time and place to carry that particular meaning, which is why it is called “symptomatic meaning”.

Recognising different levels of meaning within personal practice enables the observer, in this case myself, to extract critical information from my experience and to fragment it into separate details in order to understand it. This helps to situate my film within a popular animational framework. However, it also enables me to see the whole system of meanings in the popular animation framework as a fluid system of patterns and change. In that system, each time recognition of a certain pattern of meaning occurs the details are joined together into a whole, which is then taken apart only to be seen as a whole again in a different light. This process enables one to have the experience of constantly and critically observing popular animation.

Being linked to a commercial and industrial framework, popular animation communicates meanings through narrative. However, recognising different levels of meaning within personal practice enables me to see popular animational practice as a structure in which psychological and subjective patterns emerge and change over time in relation to their socio-cultural context. Hence popular animational practice can be seen as both bearing meaning and creating it.

9.3 Summary

The editing process in popular animation is as significant as the film production itself, since it is linked to commercial limitations of timing and structure that in turn affect a film's narrative and the meanings it communicates. Its significance is further strengthened by the fact that popular animation film typically contains thousands of shots and frames that are edited and manipulated to create the film's message. Hence, the popular animation film carries profound social and cultural meanings that are produced through its narratives and formal characteristics and their editing into a sequence of meaningful cognitive flow. That flow of meaning creates an overall conceptual statement in the film, which ranges from the concrete identification of the bare plot to the meaning that situates the film within contemporary thought. Recognising different levels of meaning in my personal practice enables me to see popular animational practice as a complex adaptive system in which psychosocial patterns emerge in relation to context, while both bearing and creating meaning.

Bordwell and Thompson (2001: 39-41) argue that the human mind is constantly working, even when walking, reading, listening or looking at someone's face. The mind is constantly seeking order, significance and meaning, testing the world for breaks in habitual patterns and trying to unify what seems to be non-harmonic. Popular animation relies on this dynamic, unifying quality of the human mind. It provides occasions when viewers can exercise and develop their ability to pay attention, to anticipate upcoming events, to sense the intention of the filmmaker, to draw conclusions and to connect pieces of information into a larger whole. The popular animation film as a complete unit, therefore, is a dynamic adaptation of its structure to an animator who creates it, the industry within which the product is situated and the socio-cultural context within which all of these are embedded. As we have seen in this chapter, popular animational practice can be analysed with the theoretical and practical tools of cinematic analysis. Table 9.1 summarises the similarities and differences between live-action cinema and popular animation.

Table 9.1 Comparison of popular animation and live-action cinema

| | Preparatory stages | Actors | Materiality | Sound | Process | Editing | Literature |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------------|----------------|--|
| Live-action films | - Script writing - Story board | Adjusted to maximum representation | 1. Live action with occasional animation 2. film strip | Mostly direct intellectual representation | Planned with occasional spontaneity | Computerized | Mostly on film-making process, cultural, social and psychological issues |
| Popular two-dimensional films | - Script writing - Story board | Created for 100% representation | Line, dot / pixel, pigment, wide range of supportive materials and textures | Mostly emotional representation | Planned with integral spontaneity | Computerized | Mostly biographies, commercial, educational and industrial aspects. |

To summarise my position on the significance of popular animation, I would argue that research into popular animation has not been previously conducted at a

level of understanding of its formal and cinematic characteristics that would identify it as an artistic and cinematic form. Yet popular animation shows a unique, creative aspect of the craft of image-making in every single frame. Therefore it needs to be analysed not only as a film form but also as an art form, in addition to aspects of its commercialism, and its viewers and their perception of it. I am aware that some critics, such as Paul Wells (2000:45-46), did reflect on abstract and experimental animation as an art form, but his reflections were not addressed directly towards popular commercial animation. Therefore I propose to explore popular animation through tools of analysis that will reveal its independent and creative aspects.

Chapter 10:

Situating Personal Practice within the Popular Animational Context

Paul Wells (2000) divided animation into two main sub-categories, one being independent or experimental animation, and the other commercial and industrial animation. In my research I focus on studying popular commercial animation produced mainly by big companies such as Warner Bros., Hanna-Barbera, Disney/Pixar, DreamWorks and 20th Century Fox. However, I would argue that since any type of animation film works within the framework of the animation medium, this is done according to the same fundamental structure of animation. I therefore propose a critical structure by which one can review and understand any animational experience, regardless of the style of its appearance. This approach is now possible – and long overdue – particularly because of a recent shift in which animation is seen as a multidimensional, adaptive experience that is comprised of creative, independent, industrial and commercial aspects.

This chapter concentrates on how popular contemporary animation repositions itself as an art form as well as a cinematic and industrial form, and therefore provides a platform for its critical, analysis. Within that process of reflective analysis I situate my own practice as observation of popular multidimensional animation. I compare binary popular animation (which relates to Wells’s definition of “classical” or “orthodox” animation) with multidimensional, contemporary animation (which relates to a certain extent to Wells’s definition of “developmental” animation) and with my personal practice (as a reflexive critical approach). My practice clearly portrays the self-reflective critical process that popular contemporary animation undergoes, as it has the quality of mixing commercial animation with artistic expression. Wells calls the type of animation that combines orthodox and experimental modes “developmental animation”.

However, as opposed to Wells, I do not see extremes or tensions between artistic and commercial animation. I believe that so-called orthodox animation complements the experimental and both develop the medium and its possibilities. Experimental

animation explores the possibilities of the medium and extends the use of human talent within the framework of the animation medium, whereas commercial popular animation utilises this information and reaches with these new ideas a broader audience. Both types, in my opinion, can convey ideological and social meanings with similar intensity despite their seemingly different appearances. An even more efficient development can be seen in multidimensional popular animation that combines these two approaches into a new type that gives popular animation greater social and cultural significance.

10.1 Popular animation as art form and its critical reflexive analysis

Here I take Wells's (2000) analysis of the relation between an artistic experimental approach in animation and popular commercial animation as my point of departure. His comparison between experimental and orthodox animation is somewhat binary and simplistic since it categorises animation as being either art or a commercial, industrial product. However, Wells acknowledges the existence of developmental animation, which is close to what I observe as multidimensional animation. I extend his comparison to see how popular animation evolves within its own framework, from orthodox, popular, cartoon animation into multidimensional animation, and how my practice reflects on and within that development. The critical, reflective interrelations between independent artwork and commercial popular qualities can clarify critical points of debate about the interplay of system and structure in contemporary popular animation that has embraced globalization and technological developments. Independent artistic development in animation is here defined as its "inner" structure, whereas animation film's popular commercial framework is defined as its "external" system that helps it to function in its socio-cultural context.

10.1.1 Process of animational evolution from binary to multidimensional stage to self-reflexive observation

Whereas binary popular animation can be summarised as serving certain ideological positions, technological development and less difficult modes of production have enabled popular animation to develop more critical, independent, personal and creative qualities that were not there before in the proportions observed now. Hence, a new dynamic, complex multidimensional state has emerged in popular animation film. My practice is an example of that process. However, it further suggests an even more independent, flexible approach in popular animation by raising the issue of self-reflexive observation and thereby emphasising the notion of authorship.

In this section I situate my practice broadly in the context of binary and multi-dimensional popular animation, based on Paul Wells's analysis of binary popular animation as set out in his book *Understanding Animation* (2000). To situate my practice I refer to different criteria according to which one can evaluate popular animation film. Some of these criteria relate to a film's narrative, and some to its effects and complexity. Table 10.1 highlights some of these criteria in a popular framework:

Table 10.1 Differentiation between various types of popular animation (10.1.1)

| | Binary animation | Multidimensional animation | Reflexive personal practice |
|---|---|--|--|
| Narrative content | Narrative results from characters being structured around gags, conflicts and their behaviour. Continuity is insignificant because of the commercial, repetitive, fragmented structure. | Narrative is communicated through independent critical characters that relate to the narrative flow. Continuity demands following the narrative fully. | Narrative represents the externalized self-observation of character's inner world of belief and thought. Continuity requires following the narrative fully. |
| Narrative form | Linear, simplistic, stereotyped to a fixed binary perception. Almost no direct speech by the characters; instead voice-over. | Linear, complex in its critical observation of previous beliefs. Direct speech of the characters. | Circular and linear. Self-reflexive, fluid, open-ended. Speech-led narrative focuses on characters' thought patterns. |
| Appearance (film form) | Flat, graphic spaces, basic colours, two-dimensions mostly, line is emphasised. | A sense of deeper dimensionality through computerized, complex textures and colours, realistic camera angles. | Range of textures. Mix of dimensional perception (through line, shape and colour), range of viewing angles. |
| Relationship between animator and animation | Indirect, commercial framework (many staff working on various parts of the film). | Indirect but technological advances enable more personal involvement of each animator (fewer staff). | Direct, as I have been director, animator, technician and actor. |
| Viewer | Bordwell and Thompson (2001: 147) argue that besides experimental, commercial films by Chuck Jones, in which the viewer is involved, the viewer in the rest of the industry is separated from the film. | The viewer may identify with the film due to its critical position towards previous social and cultural beliefs. | The viewer may identify with and follow the character and actually become the character through self-observation that is externalized throughout the narration and the story line. |
| Movement | Limited, stylized | Realistic, still limited in parts | Realistic full movement |
| Reflection on changes in the industry | Commercial graphicity that aims to tame the viewer's attention and sell more. | Wide use of computer software enables hyper-real textures and mapping of environment. | Use of photographs and textures connect the film with multidimensional complexity made possible with technological advances. |

My practice therefore suggests the next stage in the development of popular animation. While multidimensional popular animation has shifted to a more critical

approach towards previous patterns of thought and appearance, it has yet to reach that self-reflexive stage where it observes its own processes and structure as my practice proposes. Elkins (1999: 22) explains that the significance of such observation lies in the long hours spent in the studio that can make a person into a treasury of nearly incommunicable knowledge about colour, line and the expression of feelings. This knowledge is lacking in the popular animation literature, which looks sterile, scientific and merchandised, whereas – similarly to the Inuit who have thousands of words for ice – animators have many different words that define various types of line, movement and colour.

Elkins (1999: 97) says that in a museum it is often possible to tell an experienced artist from a theoretician, because the artist will step up to an image and make gestures or trace outlines. These movements are not deliberate but second nature, an automatic response. The artist moves with the image, the theoretician against it, folding his hands. Similarly, when an animator creates movement in frames, s/he becomes the film, engraving the patience to sit in one position for hours, letting the wrist or the fingers turn white with the pressure of pen on paper. In that way, Elkins (1999: 98) notes, the meaning seems to travel like an electric current from the artist's body to the chemicals and from there to the eye of the viewer. Clearly, the animator creates the character while merging with the role, thus opening the door for possibilities of emotional and actor work that Paul Wells (2000: 35, 45) refers to as experimental and developmental possibilities within the animational system.

10.1.2 Opportunities for critical analysis and contextualizing of popular animation

Popular two-dimensional animation is often regarded as cartoons, since the first animators came from comic strip experiences and treated their first films like moving caricatures rather than a cinematic art product (Bendazzi, 1994: 24). Yet nowadays historians and scholars have repositioned the cartoon as an art form and provided a platform for a critical analysis of popular animation. Paul Wells has initiated such a critical analysis by separating commercial from non-commercial film, in order to foreground the relationship between the cartoon and other kinds of

work. I use his analysis as a first step to further critical observation of popular animation.

Wells (2000) identifies some of the elements of animation films and analyses them from an aesthetic, artistic point of view. He starts with an exploration of the meaning of basic elements within two-dimensional animation films. Wells differentiates between orthodox (classical, popular commercial animation), experimental (independent, artistic animation) and developmental animation (which combines orthodox and experimental). Table 10.2 reproduces Wells's (2000: 36) discussion of the differences in the appearances of these three types of animation film.

Table 10.2 Wells's identification of various types of animation (Wells (2000:36, Table 2.1))

| Orthodox animation (or binary) | Developmental (or multidimensional) | Experimental animation |
|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Configuration | ↔ | Abstraction |
| Specific Continuity | ↔ | Specific Non-Continuity |
| Narrative Form | ↔ | Interpretive Form |
| Evolution of Context | ↔ | Evolution of Materiality |
| Unity of Style | ↔ | Multiple Styles |
| Absence of Artist | ↔ | Presence of Artist |
| Dynamics of Dialogue | ↔ | Dynamics of Musicality |

Wells (2000: 32) argues that experimental animation retains its natural or primal form, whereas popular commercial animation has developed a geometric form, which is a rational compromise that animators have produced to keep animation

circulating in the broadcast medium. I have likewise referred to that issue in the first and second parts of my research. An example of that compromise solution would be the obvious circles so famously used in Disney films, for instance, in the drawing of Mickey Mouse, or the geometric lines and forms in Hanna-Barbera's *Powerpuff Girls* (1998-2004) TV series. Maybe the artists did compromise in the popular animational appearances, yet they achieved a certain level of complexity of meaning that is unique to their use of geometric forms. Accordingly, David Pye (1968: 2) argues that the viewer and the artist – rather than the materials and units comprising the animation – give the final art product its meaning. My practice is a clear example of Pye's proposition, as it retains geometric forms alongside the experimental, personal qualities of line and texture without becoming what Wells calls experimental animation. The mixed quality of commercial and artistic expression in my film positions it as belonging to the contemporary multidimensional approach.



Image 54: Use of various techniques in *Eyen*. (© J.L. Chansay, 2001)

An example of an animation film that mixes various approaches similar to my practice is *Eyen* (Jean-Luc Chansay, 2001, France). The film uses drawn images, three-dimensional textures and computer adaptations. Both my film and Chansay's explore the evolution of film's materiality and the skill of presentation that Wells (2000: 45) categorises as experimental animation. Nevertheless, my film retains a formal, evolving narrative, a main character, figurative appearances, a unity of style, dialogue within the film and a seeming absence of the artist. These qualities, according to Wells, define commercial,

orthodox animation. By combining these two styles, my film reaches the overlapping area of the two and reminds the viewer of animation's materiality within its popular framework.

Another example of a multidimensional, contemporary mix of styles is DreamWorks's *The Road to El Dorado* (2000), which mixes orthodox and experimental qualities. The film experiments with computer software that enables it at times to have almost abstract qualities, as in the episode where the characters sing about the joy of being rich. In that scene abstract and geometric shapes are combined with the "usual" popular, realistic style. Computer-generated animation techniques facilitate the modes of production but also enable the animator to experiment with animational materiality and raise the complexity of a film's appearance and narrative.

Overall, I do not believe in divisions and separations, which are artificially imposed by social and cultural conditioning, as Wells does in relation to the animation medium. These divisions are not only employed as discursive tools but actually are often treated by theorists and practitioners as marking out completely different types of animation. I am sure that any artefact includes experimental and intensive narrative frameworks, just as commercial animation does, simply in a different way of presentation. Consequently, so-called orthodox and experimental animation together complete and develop the medium. While experimental animation explores the possibilities of materials as well as those of the animator, commercial popular animation expands its technological possibilities to facilitate production and advance the medium.

Similar to the growing change in narratives and representation of popular animation in the USA, other countries have also raised the complexity and multi-dimensionality of popular animation. An emerging global culture has brought an openness and awareness of the East to the West that can be clearly seen in the constant flow of Japanese animation films into Western countries. These films have quickly altered global attitudes towards popular animation, bringing it a new, fresh, adult outlook and challenging Disney's superiority, which was already weakened by a growing animation industry anyway (Pilling, 1997:x, xii, 115, 121). Bendazzi

(1994: 412) observes that the Japanese films are based on believable characters with realistic psychological reactions, which represent a departure from the stereotypical binary production and a move into multidimensional complexity. That shift has also been prominent in European animation which, although it has become more commercialised, is still regarded as artistic and picturesque (Bendazzi, 1994: 81). It seems that all over the world animators look for new observations on life and social institutions. For example, the French film *Belleville Rendez-vous* (Sylvain Chomet, 2003), which is a co-production by France, Canada, Belgium and Britain, questions and observes anew the relationships between the elderly and the young, the past and the present. Bendazzi (1994) notes that the world of animation has been moving more and more towards audiences other than children, asking adults to explore anew the animation medium. The animators themselves have moved into a more individual approach of self-exploration.

Alongside the experimental artistic qualities in my practice, I have kept the characteristics of popular commercial animation film, which Wells defines as an orthodox style of animation. However, the combination of the various types of animation in my practice and its complex multidimensional quality raises new issues for popular animation. That new multidimensional approach in popular animation, as seen in my practice, reminds the viewer of animation's materiality, complexity and dynamic relations within the framework of popular animation. Vital forms of animation emerge from the complex structure of popular animation, which is in a constant state of evolution and reflexive development.

The growing complexity and ambivalence of texts in popular animation is a process that goes alongside similar developments in the global socio-economic context of the contemporary society. Throughout my research, I am aware of the perceived tensions between 'constraint and creativity' or 'commerce and culture' that many writers, particularly sociologists, address. Hesmondhalgh (2002), as well as Du Gay and Pryke (2002), for example, offer an analysis of cultural industries that produce artifacts amongst which one can find popular animation as well. They argue that entertainment being part of cultural industry draws on and helps to constitute people's fantasies, emotions and identities by making and circulating products,

which are in fact complex, ambivalent and contested texts. My research works along similar lines of inquiry as seen earlier. Similarly to Du Gay and Pryke's (2002) analysis of the extent to which the economy is both a cultural construction and is industrially dominated, my research explores the extent to which popular animation is both an artistic cultural and industrial product. However, as opposed to Hesmondhalgh and Du Gay and Pryke who analyse the effect of the socio-economic change on cultural industries as systems of production in general, my research analyses the effect of this change as expressed in a particular type of two-dimensional popular animation.

10.2 Summary

Wells's (2000) analysis works as a point of observation of an evolving relationship between the independent artwork of animation and its commercial, popular qualities. Those relations serve to clarify points in a critical debate about the interplay between the commercial framework of popular animation as system and its independent artistic development as the structure of contemporary, multidimensional animation that has embraced globalization and technological developments. Popular animation is in a constant state of evolution and experimental development. Accordingly, my practice mixes experimental artistic qualities with the narrative structure of a popular framework, thus reaching the overlapping area between the two types. The self-reflexive subjective analysis of my practice enables me to identify that overlapping area with a multidimensional approach that critically observes traditional binaries and oppositions in culture, practice and industry. However, it also raises the issue of authorship, which is very strong in independent, artistic animation and almost ignored in popular animation.

Part Two – Conclusion

Formal characteristics in popular animation filmmaking involve aesthetic and psychological responses that influence physical and emotional sensations. They have meanings and roles that give rise to the whole organisational structure of animational practice. In multidimensional popular animation as well as in my practice these characteristics are balanced so that a personal, more emotional approach is linked and interrelated with a commercial approach. On the one hand, the actual process of animating these characteristics, combining them into a whole, gives them a subjective personal quality that springs from the animator's workmanship. On the other hand, the examination of these characteristics raises the issue of a film's representational and narrative structures as reflecting psychological and social realities within which animators operate. That, in turn, brings out a critical, reflexive relation between the observer and the observed. The animator as observer introduces the issue of critical reflexivity into contemporary multidimensional animational appearances and narratives that question previous beliefs.

The examination of the meaning of formal characteristics within personal practice indicates their complex dynamic relationships, which in turn affect the dynamics of the whole film. It also indicates a constant process of learning and development within filmmaking practice as well as of the animator him/herself. Critical self-observation of my practice has raised my awareness of the reconstruction and analysis of obvious daily experiences in the process of animation. Such observation of the filmmaking process does not provide one with laws about how to make an animation film, but with explanations of the reasons, and abilities and the impetus behind the inner creative, emotional process of an animator. One must disentangle concepts and unravel them in order to explain them, and much is lost in the process, because of the translation of the internal world of feelings and thoughts into the external world of reason, logic and narrative imagery. Words give but only a small hint of the reality of colour, line and movement as an analysis of the visual dynamics of formal characteristics. However, they do give an insight into popular animational filmmaking and its constant evolution within its own framework. Through self-

reflexive analysis of my practice and its conceptual structuring I make the following connections, where the angled brackets indicate that one thing leads to another:

Animator >> Film>> Reflection on action >> Reader >> Animator

Critical analysis of my practice has revealed the animator's actions as an element that becomes part of an inner structure of the cinematic framework within which any film operates, whereas its cinematic analysis has portrayed the outer structure of the film. I strongly believe that understanding the process of the evolution of popular animation and its dynamic relations with experimental as well as cinematic structures may transform the current approach of the practitioner of popular animation into becoming a critical one. Such an understanding will enable the animator to aspire to greater self-expression while at the same time using technology that facilitates the industrial process and enables him to experiment with animation's materiality.

Chapter 11:

Evaluation of Contemporary Multidimensional Approach to Animational Narratives and Representation

The research process has revealed that popular two-dimensional animation has undergone a process of profound change. It has changed from a binary stage in which popular animation was positioned as an ideological tool of communication to a multidimensional stage in which it has become critical of the ideology it conveys and of its position within the social and industrial framework in which it operates. Popular animation has therefore shown itself to be a complex, adaptive system that observes and reacts to its social and cultural environment by identifying regularities and irregularities and condensing that observation into a visual, cinematic mode of expression. For example, multidimensional animation re-examines issues of entertainment and social values by a redefinition of past myths that had served American commercial ideology.

However, popular animation does not merely react to its observations, it also provides critical, visual feedback to its viewers. As technological modes of animation film production expand and become easier to manage, its narratives and representation become more complex and sophisticated. That, in turn, poses new questions regarding the role of popular animation as it moves from simplistic appearances that supported mainly binary American commercial ideology towards a multidimensional, critical and reflexive approach. The repetitive patterns of narratives and representation that characterised the late binary stage of popular animation presumably have led viewers gradually to become aware of what is seen (Pilling, 1997:3). One becomes a professional observer of animational details and qualities when seeing the same image repeatedly on screen. Theorists such as Debord (1992), Baudrillard (1983, 1999) and Bourdieu (1999) have emphasised a notion of the spectacular in our perceptual engagement, by which they saw audience as being stupefied and becoming passive observers. However, contemporary generation of viewers may have become a critical audience that analyses what it sees.

That multidimensional critical approach in animation production, as seen through my practice, arouses a new sense of authorship that emerges from critical observation of both the process and the animator. It enables a new, dynamic development of the independent personal and creative qualities of animation alongside its commercial framework and industrial limitations. A multidimensional animator is aware and critically observant of his very role as observer and in this way creates critically informed practice. Through reflexive analysis of animators' practice as one of its approaches, popular animation industry can develop its practice further and become critically aware not only of the society in which it is positioned but also of itself as a medium.

11.1 How does this study answer the core research question?

Part One of the research situated popular animation as a critical observer of its former visual and narrative languages. The underlying beliefs in popular animation are camouflaged by the mythic appearance of a storytelling form that is unquestioningly accepted by most people in Western society. In that way popular animational images appear familiar and therefore non-threatening, while enabling ideological, commercial messages to be communicated without much attention being drawn to them. However, as opposed to binary popular animation, which was overtly politicized, multidimensional animation does not seem to hold to a strong ideological line, due to the unstable direction of ideological and social development in contemporary, globalized society.

Instead, the popular animation industry has concentrated on a critical analysis of its formal characteristics and appearances that situate it as a film form within a commercial, artistic and theoretical context and thereby open the doors to further development of the medium. Thus, Part Two of my research has identified two main levels within which the appearances in popular animation operate: one, the level of internal formal and expressive characteristics in every animated frame as seen through my practice, and two, the external level of a film's cinematic characteristics that "wrap" the overall message of the film. Both levels are significant to an understanding of how the popular animational medium works in its social and

industrial context but also how it is inwardly structured to convey those ideological messages that I have identified in Part One. While formal characteristics bind the inner structure of popular animation film and reveal a subjective, critical, reflexive authorship as seen through the analysis of my practice, its cinematic characteristics help to situate that practice within a popular industrial framework that is critically aware of its ideological and industrial position. Hence, the research portrays a development of popular animation from a commercial, binary structure to a multidimensional practice that embodies a critical, reflexive approach. Observation of that development reveals an emotional, subjective, personal approach in popular animation that is linked and interrelated with a commercial, industrial approach. Analysis of a film's characteristics reveals complex levels of psychological perception of animational narratives, ideological statements and abstract principles.

Of course, the whole research was carried out from my personal point of view as an animator and as a critical analyst of popular animational practice. Each time I speak of an animator, of his/her feelings, actions and intentions, I imply the way I personally work and act as a practitioner of popular animation.

11.2 Research innovation

The process of moving from theoretical analysis to practical exploration challenges and enriches the core research question. The innovation of my research focuses upon a combination of intuition with analytical tools which help to see patterns and extract insights from practice to theory. These insights can then be used as principles on which to base ideas.

- The research critically re-examines earlier research work on popular animation, which was mainly focused on the early stages of animation, the big, leading companies in the market and biographies of a few leading animators such as Chuck Jones and Walt Disney. My research proposes a fresh outlook on popular animation as a cinematic and artistic form that embodies psychological and ideological patterns. It observes the complexity and multidimensionality of the formal and cinematic

characteristics that structure popular animational narratives and its ideological discourses. Although authors like Leslie (2002), Pilling (1997), Wasko (2001) and Hollinshead (1998) talk about ideology in animation films, none explores in depth popular animational practice in terms of its appearances and representation. Furthermore, as far as I am aware, these critical analysts of popular animation are not practitioners of *popular commercial animation*. Therefore, I may presume that my self-reflexive analysis of practice as a reflection on critical theory is a new approach. The literature on animation written by animators, such as Simon (2003), Williams (2001) and Taylor (1999), mostly guide the public technically as to how to create a moving image / animation film. However, there is a difference between critical, theoretical analysis of professional, self-reflexive craftsmanship and a commercial guide to creating a moving image. When animators do reflect on their work as, for example, Culhane (1998) and Kanfer (1997) do, they mostly reflect on it as a retrospective of social and political experience. None critically analysed their work and the meanings that were created throughout the process. Yet, analysis of self-reflexive practice not only contributes to critical academic knowledge on popular animation, but also sees a practitioner of popular animation as a critical observer who may influence the ideological and narrative structures of popular animation film. Furthermore, such analysis establishes the notion of authorship within industrial commercial animation, which in turn expands the critical abilities found within narratives and representation of such animation. The research therefore contributes to the development of existing knowledge about popular two-dimensional animation as well as its theoretical critical perspectives.

- The research displays originality and novelty in the application of cinematic methods of critical analysis to popular animation. I explore popular animation film as a cinematic form by identifying a cinematic structure of popular animation film, using personal practice as an example. Formal and cinematic characteristics, their arrangement in

popular animation film and their complex dynamic relations with experimental as well as cinematic systems add to the meaning of a film's narrative, which is situated within the social and cultural context of those who have created it.

- The research applied existing research methodologies to multidimensional popular animation, using a critical, self-reflexive approach. I have developed a methodology that conveys a double-voiced discourse, which accepts different approaches as seen in cultural, social and film studies, and then critiques and reflects back on them from the point of view of a practitioner of popular animation. This methodology identifies a cyclical pattern of activity, in which theory is reflected on in practice, which in turn affects the theory. Since my critical approach is an on-going observation of contemporary *changes in the animation industry*, it is open-ended and leads to develop further the critical framework of analysis of popular animation. Yet its implications are crucial, as the research clearly establishes the political, cultural, social and artistic positions of the popular animation industry.
- The research has developed new knowledge about and theoretical insights into popular two-dimensional animation due to an *ability to analyse critically* impetuses and skills in popular animation film production as a result of the method of self-reflective practice. Self-reflexivity in my practice enabled me to observe critically adaptations, meanings, representation and understanding of personal practice as well as of popular animational practice. This self-reflexiveness challenges "old" literature definitions of what is "technical" in animation film, in terms of its formal, cinematic and expressive characteristics.
- I am aware that my practice was not commercial. Creating my practice involved unlimited time for filmmaking, a smaller scale of film production and less advanced technological vehicles as opposed to what is available in popular industrial film production. However, I still can relate to the popular animation practice on the level of a film's meaning,

narrative and cinematographic structure, style, mechanics, concepts and principles.

11.3 Review of methodological structure in wider context

Self-reflexive analysis of my practice shaped and defined popular animation as a critical art. This study began with the identification of ideological discourses in popular animation, which were later linked to self-reflexive practice, which in turn reflected back on that analysis. Thus, a circular development of animational practice was recognised. Yet, there is also linear progress as well, perceived through the analysis of the social and industrial progress of the popular animation industry. Seeing these two seemingly separate modes of analysis interlinked indicates the multidimensional complexity of popular animation.

Throughout the research, I have recognised several levels of structural analysis within popular animation that further support its complexity. One of them is the analysis of popular animation as a commercial cinematic product. The other is the analysis of its formal and expressive meanings, examination of which reveals their complex relationships, which affect the dynamics of the whole filmic system. Understanding the process of the evolution of popular animation and its complex dynamic relations with experimental as well as cinematic structures suggests a forthcoming transformation of the practitioner of popular animation into a critical practitioner.

My work shows that whereas binary popular animation has been observed and theorized, for example, by Dorfman and Mattelart (1984), multidimensional popular animation has not yet been theorized in a way similar to my research. Therefore my research raises the understanding and critical awareness of the production processes, but more significantly, my practice gives rise to a new type of reflexive popular animation as the next step which will open the imagination to the potential of popular animational practice. Reflexive practice opens up the possibility for an animator to aspire to higher self-expression while using technology that facilitates the process of film production as well as indicating the possible expansion of critical abilities within narratives and representation of such animation. Though it is difficult

to predict, it seems that popular animation is going to develop into an intricate network that works across disciplines and styles and is structured as a complex, adaptive, reflexive system.

The patterns through which the research has been developed filter different levels of perception and analysis. I have proceeded from the recognition of ideological patterns that are embedded in popular animation through cognition, analysis and conception, to recognition and evaluation of formal and cinematic characteristics that reflect ideological and psychological patterns. In that way, I have moved from abstract observation to concrete analysis of theory and practice and back to abstract implications of that analysis. Each such transition filters more and more of the information that I have found. Knowing and understanding popular animation and its evolution within its own framework is an ongoing adaptive process in and through which objective and subjective issues continually emerge and evolve. Such a process has led me to become self-conscious not only of my professional knowledge and experience but of my theoretical knowledge as well.

11.4 How study situates itself within contemporary context

The initial impression of the simplicity of popular commercial animation is somewhat mistaken; as Taylor (2001: 138) explains, things are never merely simple since complexity is inescapable. Popular animational narratives and representation as seen in this research consist of units as well as the animator's beliefs and of ideological patterns, all of which are intricate in their structure. The aspect of complexity in popular animation indicates that it is an integral part of a contemporary multi-dimensional approach that has arisen in tandem with advanced technology and the process of globalization. Rapid change of imagery and image quality generated by computer technology enables popular animation to reach further levels of complexity, whereas the rapid speed of information and telecommunication technologies makes complexity an unavoidable aspect of any narrative in contemporary forms of visual entertainment. As popular animation is bound by its mode of production to advanced technology, it takes embraces these complexities on a narrative as well as visual levels.

11.5 Significance of practice-led research

Despite a strong development in popular animational contents and techniques and wide global distribution, popular animation film remains to a great degree an underestimated and neglected field of critical inquiry. Animation as a medium involves both the preparatory-theoretical aspect of animating and the performing aspect. Both sides need to be explored, and explained in detail in order to tease out their problematics and their solutions if one wants to critically observe popular animation as a whole. To explore animational narratives and representation, which are integral parts of the actual process of filmmaking, it makes sense to perform the actual filmmaking rather than read about it. Practice is therefore essential to my research.

Throughout the research, every stage of my practice has responded to two sub-themes that answer the core research question, thus re-informing the theory that has driven its production. For example, the narrative and the cinematic structure of my film respond to the critical theoretical evaluation of the popular animational industry as explored in Part One, whereas the way in which I have experimented and applied formal characteristics within the film are directly linked to the self-reflexive analysis of Part Two. Analysis of popular animation within a framework of personal practice has therefore become a central part of the research process. The reflexive approach has positioned my practice as action research that feeds back and forwards into the critical, theoretical analysis of the research and enabled a more in-depth contextualized analysis of the actual filmmaking process.

My research is continually self-evaluative with ongoing modifications, where the applications of the results are part of the methodology. Self-reflexive analysis of my practice helped me to recognise the significant role of the animator as author, observer and commercial practitioner. As part of its adaptation to a commercial popular framework, my film had to be limited in terms of timing and expression. Hence, my reflexive practice acts both as a process of self-observation and as a clarification of the relations between commercial cinematic and independent artistic aspects of popular animation.

The second part of the research concentrates on the critical in-depth analysis of personal practice as well as applying to it some of the cinematic theory and seeing how it reflects on and enriches the theoretical investigation of Part One. For example, it explores the various types of meanings that can be decoded from the narrative of my film and the way in which editing projects my personal beliefs into the film's narrative structure. Part Two therefore unites in its observation personal and industrial, professional and academic experiences as integral, unifying parts of popular animational practice. As part of commercialization, the cinematic guidelines and rules direct the animation experience in a particular way that creates the familiar graphic, exaggerated simplicity that has been so characteristic of popular two-dimensional animation. That is why with all the significance of personal practice and its exploration, an analysis of the industry is essential to my research, whether through the ideological and narrative discourses the industry applies or through its cinematic and formal structuring of a film.

My personal practice relates to the popular animation industry, but does not represent it literally; rather it presents itself as a set of propositions. Consequently, my practice is the embodiment of the theoretical investigation on the one hand, and on the other, it discovers the full impact of the creative process that flows through an animator and therefore gives rise to new questions and enriches the theoretical investigation by providing more of the critical engagement. In that way I have constructed a self-reflexive observation of popular animational practice both as an insider (a practitioner) and an outsider (a critical analyst). Such an approach leads to the discovery of the spontaneous, independent, creative aspects of popular animation filmmaking that slightly alter one's plans, enriching the film with individual artistic experience that no critical theoretical analyst who is not also a practitioner could have known. Yet it is by discovering that independent creative side of popular animation production that makes understanding the industrial and commercial aspect of it as a whole possible. Rather than seeing animation as a duality of product versus audience or its producers, I reveal the interrelational aspect of a triadic continuity: animator—the feeling of being the creation—the audience.

11.6 Collaborative process during practice

I believe that every action requires the collaborative efforts of a few people in order to achieve the final result. Such collaboration is found even in the simplest thing that we do every day, such as driving our car, for example. Someone has been working to create that car for us to drive; someone else helps us to maintain it. The same process happens with food, clothes and anything else that touches our lives. Animation filmmaking also requires collaboration, as I have seen in my practice.

The most significant of the people who helped me is my husband – Gil Dekel. Gil is a poet and a creative writer, who wrote for me a story that was based on my theoretical, critical investigation of popular two-dimensional animation. That story inspired me to explore the problematics of popular animation through making a film as an interpretation of it. Hence, I adjusted Gil's initial story to what seemed best to suit my aims as a researcher and as an animator. I wrote the script for the film and drew the exact storyboard according to which the film was going to be done. For more than two years I researched movement and appearances for the film and then drew the frames for my scenes. Gil helped me by posing for the movements I needed. During the filmmaking process, many scenes from the original storyboard were completely changed as they were adjusted to match my ideas. After I finished the drawings of every scene, Gil would help me scan every frame as the overall amount of frames used for the film was close to 6,000 pages. I then continued working on the computer, painting each and every frame, finding the right textures and colours. It was a long process, after which I edited all the frames on *Adobe Premier* into a running film, along with the soundtrack on which both Gil and I had been working together.

As I am deaf in one ear, I perceive sound differently from most people. To help my film look complete I asked Gil to help me with the sound. We both were working with many people on the music for the film till we reached the point of choosing the sound of just one guitar as opposed to all the complicated plans I had initially had in mind. After we had chosen the music, it was essential to match the imagery to the sound. My deafness changes the way I see image in relation to sound, and so I asked Gil to help me with the editing of the film. My film is therefore the result of our

working together, not only the two of us but also of all the other people who helped us. My collaboration with Gil, the other people around me, my supervisors, all have given me the greatest gift of all – to be able to express myself as fully as I can.

11.7 Superfluous areas of research

In the process of research, some parts of the research have become superfluous, for example, the subject of morality. While researching ideological discourses within popular animational narrative it is very easy to slip into a judgmental attitude and relate to popular animation on a level of morality. However, I have realised that claiming morality or immorality for one's film would be an attempt to impose values and beliefs on others, whereas morality changes in relation to time and place. I have come to the conclusion that the word "morality" itself is an individual opinion about suggested behaviour and direction of thought and therefore is not objective and cannot be used as a tool for criticism. Researchers like Ward (2002) analysed popular animation's multi-layered textual contents for their moral domain, Disney's in particular. However, I have found that such an investigation makes the researcher stray from much more profound domains of inquiry on which the narrative and the representation of animation films are structured.

Within the superfluous aspects of research I would also include the notion of violence. I believe that violence in popular animation films acts as a gag, shifting the viewer's attention from the subject of ideology and social beliefs in the films. Certainly, the notion of violence is important. Yet I believe that similarly to consumerism, where external shapes or "events" arouse desire while the intent behind them seems to be hidden, the notion of violence in animation films acts as an external event that stimulates a desire to watch more, while feeling humorously relaxed and adrenalinised at the same time. Of course, one may argue that in both these cases, consumerism and popular animation, the external notion of desire needs to be explored. However, I believe that understanding the intent behind formal, expressive and cinematic characteristics will eventually explain the basic principles behind the notion of desire. This can be partially seen in the analysis of my practice. Furthermore, there is even more reason to explore the formal and expressive

characteristics of popular animation because I believe that the sharp, flat and hard-edged graphic nature of drawn popular binary animation is the reason for its attraction to the issue of violence. Popular graphic, cartoonish animation boldly affirms the graphicity of each shape and event that leave an intense visual statement on the screen. Therefore, it is perhaps because people feel so intensely active when watching animation that they feel more violence in it than in live-action films. With computer-generated imagery, on the other hand, the creation of soft three-dimensional shapes softens the abrupt animational movement and therefore may appear less violent. Although in my practice I have not been concerned with the issues of violence or gender as such, I believe I have succeeded in manifesting the combination of the research into lines of ideological inquiry with those of technical and professional representation within popular animation through reflexive practice.

I have also been aware throughout my research that popular animation is a cultural institution, which is subject to the socio-economic framework of advanced global capitalism. Movies are made to be profitable, to have wide appeal and to be distributed to Western and Westernized countries. My aim is to observe the meanings that popular animation communicates in its films and to see how it evolves within this framework of a multidimensional, global culture, while embracing critical thinking and the complexity of expression.

11.8 Research identifying new areas for further study

I propose to explore the role of popular animation as a culturing, reflexive network through which information is screened in a subjective and authoritative way. Seeing popular animation as such a network may reveal patterns through which individual and mass experience can be analysed; in addition, it may be possible to explore the information that is processed in that system on several different levels through the use of novel technological media. I have also opened a doorway to exploring further the way computer-generated imagery in popular animation affects the viewer's perception, and to what are the meanings that this technology generates. Virilio (1994, 2000), for example, has already started analysing the impact of

technology on visual perception, but that approach has not been applied yet to popular animational studies.

I also propose to explore aspects of vision through popular animation, such as the development of visualisation, particularly explanatory thinking and articulated seeing. In order to understand how reality is perceived through animation imagery as opposed to live-action films, the understanding of human visual apparatus and perceptual processing needs to be researched. That, in turn, points towards further research as regards the nature of reality perception as seen through “animation lenses” as opposed to “live-action film lenses”, which I have briefly touched on in my research.

Popular animation has the unusual gift of being long defined as simplistic, whereas it has complex metaphysical qualities that may raise a discourse on the understanding of reality. Animation shows its inner reality as a certain connection between immediate sensations, yet emphasises the illusory quality of its reality. That observation on its own has psychological and social implications as regards to how people perceive themselves and their environment.

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Appendixes

List of films used for the research:

When writing the dates of the TV series I mean the dates of recent releases, of course there are more releases of the old series.

Warner Bros.:

- *Looney Tunes* (1941-1969, 1979-2004) TV series
- *Animatrix* (2003), 110min, Wachowsky Brothers.
- *Sylvester and Tweety* (1958-1969, 1995-2002), Chuck, Jones, TV series.
- *Scooby Doo and the Alien Invasion* (2000), 80 min, Hanna Barbera and Warner Bros.
- *The Road Runner* (1949-2000), Chuck, Jones, TV series
- *The Iron Giant* (1999), 83 min.
- *Pokemon* (1998), TV series.
- *Teenage Mutants Ninja Turtles* (1987-1995), TV series.
- *Batman: The Animated Series* (1992-1995) TV series
- *Tiny Toon Adventure* (1990-1993), TV series
- *Taz-mania* (1991-1993), TV series
- *Animaniacs* (incl. *Pinky and The Brain*, *The Goodfeathers*), (1993-1998), TV series.

Hanna-Barbera:

- *Powerpuff Girls* (1998-2004) TV series.

- *The Jetsons* (1962-2002), TV series.
- *The Flintstones* (incl. *The Flintstones Kids*), (1960-1989), TV series.
- *Scooby Doo* (incl. *Scooby Doo Where are you?*, *The New Scooby Doo Movies*, *The Scooby Doo Show*, *Scooby Doo and Scrappy Doo*, *The 13 Ghost's of Scooby Doo*, *A pup named Scooby Doo*, *What's New Scooby Doo*, *All New Scooby Doo*), (1969-2002), TV series.
- *Cow and Chicken* (1997-1999), TV series.
- *I am Weasel* (1997-1999), TV series.
- *2 Stupid Dogs* (1993), TV series.
- *Tom and Jerry Kids* (1990-1993), TV series (based on original MGM series).

Disney / Pixar:

- *The Incredibles* (2005).
- *Finding Nemo* (2003).
- *Monsters Inc.* (2001), 88 min, Directed by Docter.
- *A Bug's Life* (2001), Directed by Lasseter.
- *Toy Story 2* (1999), Directed by Lasseter/Brannon.
- *Tarzan* (1999), 88 min.
- *Hercules* (1998-1999), TV show.
- *Mulan* (1998)
- *Pokahontas* (1996)
- *Pokahontas II – Journey to a New World* (1998)
- *Toy Story* (1995), Directed by Lasseter.
- *Hercules* (1993), 87 min.

- *Duck Tales* (1988-1990), TV series.
- *Little Mermaid* (1989), TV series.
- *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988), Disney & Steven Spielberg, Directed by R. Zemeckis.

Dreamwork:

- *Shrek 2* (2004)
- *Sinbad - The Legend of the seven seas* (2003)
- *Spirit; Stallion of the Cimarron* (2002)
- *Shrek* (2001), Directed by Adamson/Jenson
- *The Road to El Dorado* (2000), 89 min.
- *Antz* (1998), 87min., Directed by Darnell/Johnson

20th Century Fox/ 30th century Fox:

- *The Simpsons* (1989-2005), TV series.
- *Ice Age* (2002), Directed by Saldanha/Wedge.
- *Futurama* (1999-2000), Directed by Matt Groening, TV series.

- **Nickelodion:**

- *The Ren and Stimpy Show* (1991-1996), transmitted by Viacom's Kid's network, and (2003-on going), transmitted by Spike TV.

- **Collaboration USA/Japan:**

- *Final fantasy: The Spirits Within* (2001), Directed by Hironobu Sakaguchi, Motonori Sakakibara, 115 min.

French film:

- *Belleville Rendez-vous* (2003), Directed by Sylvain Chomet, Fr/Can/Bel/UK.

Glossary

The term CGI is a misnomer - the computer doesn't generate the images. That would be like calling traditional animation Pencil-Generated Imagery. No matter what the tool is, it requires an artist to create art. (quoted from John Lasseter by Mitchell, 2002).

The term "Three dimensional" computer imagery is also a misnomer since both the computer screen and the technique of working with imagery on the computer are based on two-dimensional perspective that was developed since early Renaissance days. The two-dimensional imagery (in particular in animation) is any image that was drawn or pixilated on a flat two-dimensional space, regardless whether it is a paper or a screen. Then even if the image appears three-dimensional on the computer screen, it is still made and viewed in terms of linear perspective, despite the fact that it has a three-dimensional effect/appearance to it (Piper, 2001: 104). The three dimensional sense that people receive sometimes from the computer generated imagery, is perceived so because Western audiences are educated in Western codes of perspective. Yet Wells (1997b: 92) argues that *the whole idea of three-dimensional graphics or imagery is not right. What it really means is that by "3-dimensional graphics" people actually mean – "perspective graphics". They present an image, which has got the correct vanishing points, and correct scaling for a three-dimensional image but basically it is on a two-dimensional screen. The information in the computer software packages is two-dimensional.* The represented image has the same center of perspective as on the screen. It is impossible to go around the image or to see how it covers another object when it moves aside.

Nevertheless, it seems that the viewers unquestioningly perceive the illusion and the manipulation of sight as a three-dimensional.

The term “Limited Animation” – is used to depict a particular style of commercial popular two-dimensional animation that was initiated in the beginning of 20th century due to commercial limitations of timing and budget. Therefore it was characterised by flatness, caricature-like directness and boldness as well as by limited movement, hard-cut editing and bright basic colours in a graphic contoured style. In that “limited” animation, artists work with standardized formulae, so they can move freely between characters and studios. Limited animation was a leading technique in popular animational sector throughout 20th century and is still the most convenient popular animational technique. This approach, however, has started changing after mid-1990’s with the introduction of CGI into the common use of every animation studio that enables easily production of a continuous movement and complex appearances on the computer.