Narrative strategies in the creation of animated poetry-films

by

Georg Diederik Grobler

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the subject of

ART

In the

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND MUSIC

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROMOTOR:

Professor Elfriede Dreyer

DATE: February 2021

Declaration

I declare that *Narrative strategies in the creation of animated poetry-films* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged using complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

20 February 2021

Summary

This doctoral study investigates the practice of narrative strategies in the creation of animated poetry-film. The status of the animator as auteur of the poetry-film is established on the grounds of the multiple instances of additional authoring that the animated poetry-film requires. The study hypothesises that diverse narrative strategies are operative in the production of animated poetry-film. Two diametrically opposed strategies are identified as ideal for the treatment of lyrical narrative. The first narrative strategy explored is that of metamorphosis, demonstrating how the filmic material originates and grows organically via stream of consciousness and free association. The second narrative strategy entails a calculated approach of structuring visual imagery and meaning through editing from a pre-existing visual lexicon. In both cases, the interdependence is explored between embodied activity and conceptual activity, between tacit and explicit knowledge in the creative act.

These two strategies are practically investigated through my creative praxis, specifically the production of two animated poetry-films, *Mon Pays* and *Parys suite*. Through these works, the strategies are tested for their effectivity in communicating visual content not contained in the poetry-text, yet adding value to the poetry/animated film hybrid.

Animated poetry-film is theoretically contextualised in terms of intermediality and the specific multi-modal nature of the medium. The construction of animated poetry-film is explored through the research study consisting of a thesis and two animated poetry-films, with the hope of contributing to research on animated poetry-film specifically, and to animation theory within the South African context.

List of key terms:
Animation; animated poetry-film; animation praxis; authorship; editing; experimental animation; metamorphosis; poetry-film; practice-based research; visual narrative strategies.

Narratiewe strategieë in die skep van geanimeerde poësiefilms

Hierdie doktorale studie ondersoek die toepassing van narratiewe strategieë in die skep van geanimeerde poësiefilms. Die status van die animasiekunstenaar as outeur van die poësiefilm is gegrond op veelvuldige gevalle van addisionele konseptuele skepping wat die maak van ’n poësiefilm vereis. Die hipotese van die studie is dat verskillende narratiewe strategieë in die skep van geanimeerde poësiefilms toegepas kan word. Twee teenoorgestelde narratiewe strategieë word in hierdie studie ondersoek. Die eerste is metamorfose, wat demonstreer hoe die filmmateriaal ontstaan en deur vrye assosiasie en bewussynstroom organies tesame met die geskrewe teks groei. Die tweede strategie behels ’n berekende benadering tot die strukturering van visuele materiaal en betekenis deur redigering vanuit ’n bestaande visuele leksikon. In beide gevalle word die interafhanklikheid van beliggaamde aktiwiteit en konseptuele aktiwiteit, van intuïtiewe en eksplisiete kennis in die kreatiewe proses ondersoek.

Hierdie twee strategieë word prakties in die twee geanimeerde poësiefilms Mon Pays en Parys suite ondersoek. In hierdie twee werke word die effektiwiteit van die strategieë getoets ten opsigte van die suksesvolle kommunikasie van hulle visuele inhoud wat nie in die teks vervat is nie, maar wat waarde tot die poësie/animasiehibried toevoeg.

Die geanimeerde poësiefilm word teoreties gekontekstualiseer ten opsigte van intermedialiteit en die spesifieke multimodale aard van die medium. Die konstruksie van geanimeerde poësiefilms word in hierdie studie ondersoek. Die navorser hoop dat dit ’n bydrae tot navorsing oor geanimeerde poësiefilm in die besonder, en tot animasieteorie binne die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks sal lewer.

Lys van kernbegrippe:

Animasie; geanimeerde poësiefilm; animasiepraksis; outeurskap; redigering; eksperimentele animasie; metamorfose, poësiefilm; praktykgebaseerde navorsing; visuele narratiewe strategieë

Mekgwa ya kanegelo ge go hlangwa difilimi tša theto tša go ekišwa ke diphoofolo

Dinyakišišo tše tša bongaka di nyakišiša tiro ya mekgwa ya kanagelo ge go hlangwe difilimi tša go ekišwa ke diphoofolo. Maemo a moekiši wa diphoofolo bjalo ka molaodi wa filimi ya theto a hwetšwa go seemo sa mabaka a mantši a go ngwala ka tlaleletšo fao go nyakwago ke filimi ya theto ya go ekišwa ke diphoofolo. Dinyakišišo tše di šišinya gore mekgwa ya kanegelo ye e fapafapanego e a šomišwa ka go tšweletšo ya filimi ya go ekišwa ke diphoofolo. Mekgwa ye mebedi ye e thulanago e a hlaolwa bjalo ka yeo e swanetšego go šomišwa go kanegelo ya mantšu. Leano la mathomo la kanegelo leo le utollotšwego ke la kgolo ya diphoofolo, leo le laetšago ka fao dingwalwa tša filimi di tšwelelago le go gola ka tlhago ka tatelano ka sengwalwa seo se ngwadilwego ka moela wa kwešišo le poledišano ya go hloka mapheko. Leano la bobedi la klanegelo le mabapi le mokgwa wo o nepišitšwego gabotse wa go beakanya seswantšho sa go bonwa le tlhalošo ka go rulaganya go tšwa go polelo ya peleng ya seo se bonwago. Mabakeng ka bobedi, go amana fa go utollwa magareng ga tiro ye e kopantšwego le tiro ye e gopolwago, magareng ga tsebo ye e kwešišwago le yeo e lego nyanyeng ka tirong ya boitlhamelo.

Mekgwa ye mebedi ye e a nyakišišwa ka go diriša mokgwa wa ka wa boitlhamelo, kudukudu go tšweletšwa ga difilimi tše pedi tša go ekišwa ke diphoofolo tšeo di bitšwago, Mon Pays le Parys suite. Ka mešomo ye, mekgwa ye e lekwa ka ga go šoma gabotse ga yona gabotse go hlagiša diteng tša go bonwa tšeo di sego gona ka gare ga Sengwalwa sa theto, le ge go le bjale e tsenya boleng go mohuta wa filimi ya theto/ya kekišo. Filimi ya theto ya go ekišwa ke diphoofolo e amantšhwa ka teori mabapi le kgokaganyo le sebopego sa yona sa mekgwa ye mentši ya polelo. Tlhamo ya filimi ya theto ya go ekišwa ke diphoofolo e utollwa ka dinyakišišo tšeo di nago le taodišo le difilimi tše pedi tša theto tša go ekišwa ke diphoofolo, ka kholofelo ya go tsenya letsogo go dinyakišišo mabapi le filimi ya theto ya go ekišwa ke diphoofolo kudukudu, le go teori ya kekišo ka gare ga seemo sa Afrika Borwa.

Lenaneo la mareo a bohlokwa:

Kekišo; filimi ya go ekišwa ke diphoofolo; mekgwa ya kekišo; bongwadi; go rulaganya; kekišo ya boitemogelo; kgolo ya diphoofolo; filimi ya theto; dinyakišišo tše di theilwego go tiro; mekgwa ya kanego ya go bonwa.

Contents

Preface

This research was instigated by personal pre-occupations in my artistic practice. In my own praxis, I have been concerned with the making of animated poetry-film since 2009, when approached to make animated films to accompany a poetry-based theatre production. I found that for a fine artist working with animation, poetry-film forms a natural fit: Painting and lyrical poetry have a similar approach to narrative, as both deal with a set of abstracted concepts rather than with storylines.

In 2014, I initiated and mentored a project aimed at establishing the concept of poetry-film in a South-African context. During the resulting *Filmverse* project, 12 poetry-films were developed and produced.. In 2016, the project was repeated as *Filmverse 2* and a further 12 films produced. Through the process of mentoring other artists both in the process of animation and in the process of translating a lyrical poem into a 'script' for an animated film, I became aware of the intricacies of these processes and the range of possible options of approach available to the artist. The need arose to do an analytical study of the creative processes involved in producing animated poetry-film to facilitate the mentoring of other artists in the making of such films. This study does not aspire to present a comprehensive analysis of animated poetry-film. Rather, it hopes to explore the authorial processes that underlie the creation of poetry-films by applying two exemplary narrative strategies in my two films; *Mon pays* and *Paris suite*.

The study consists of a thesis, an online exhibition of the two films, and a catalogue in PDF format. The exhibition and catalogue can be viewed at www.diekgrobler.co.za. Two opposing narrative strategies are theorised, each demonstrated with one of my films. Firstly, metamorphosis as narrative strategy is explained through the film *Mon Pays*, and secondly editing as narrative strategy is explained through the film *Parys suite*. The authorial role of the animator in the poetry-film, and the possibilities of animation as a semiotic system, are two sub-arguments that emerged in this study and warranted further exploration.

I would like to thank my promotor, Professor Elfriede Dreyer for her valuable guidance, knowledge, and patience. She helped me find my academic voice without losing my authorial one. Thank you also to Professor Bernadette van Haute and Doctor Gwen Miller for their input, and to Dawie Malan for unlocking the library. I acknowledge with

appreciation the postgraduate bursaries awarded to me by Unisa in 2017, 2018, and 2019. To katty vandenberghe for endless discussions and problem solving, and for setting up a digital platform for the exhibition, and to Tanya Pretorius for demystifying Word and for exceptional editing, thank you.

Thank you to animation filmmakers Anna Eijsbouts and Sasha Svirsky for generously sharing their filmmaking processes with me. Thank you to Nita Cronje who produced *Filmverse* for the ATKV, thus establishing Afrikaans animated poetry-film, and thereby setting this study in motion to some extent. I would like to acknowledge the contribution that discussions about poetry-film with members of the poetry-film community had on my understanding of the medium. Thank you to Helen Dewberry, Chaucer Cameron, Guido Naschert and Ian Gibbins in this regard. I owe a great debt of gratitude to animation journalist Nancy Denney-Phelps for constantly inspiring me through her knowledge of and enthusiasm for animation.

I would like to thank everybody who contributed in any way to the creation of my two films. On *Mon Pays*, I am grateful for the words of Ousmane Moussa Diagana and the music of Laurinda Hofmeyer. On *Parys Suite*, I want to thank Carina van der Walt for trusting me with her poetry and for her continuing collaboration. Several people are acknowledged for their creative input in the film, namely Mart-Marie Snyman for music; James Frank Robb, Charles Badenhorst, and Pieter de Klerk for sound and Elsabé Zietsman for the use of her voice. I need to acknowledge the role of Pieter van Heerden, the South African Arts Association, and the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris in the making of this film – thank you for affording me the opportunity to spend time in residence in Paris in 2016 and 2017. Thank you to the Breytenbach Centre in Wellington, for giving me the opportunity to premiere *Parys suite* at the 2018 Tuin van Digters poetry festival, and to Professors Bernard Odendaal and Franci Greyling for leading the academic discussion on the work at that event.

My husband, Gerrie Snyman has been unwavering in his support of this undertaking, and I dedicate this study to him, in gratitude.

List of illustrations

List of video links

Glossary of key terms

Animation. Animation is a very broad and varied field of which the parameters are continually shifting due to technological developments. To include every possible application and manifestation of the medium, it is essential to keep its definitions open-ended and fluid. In my own work, and in the work of other artists I will be discussing, liberal use is made of a combination of materials and techniques, including manipulated live-action footage. Animation is regarded in this study as the frame-by-frame construction of a cinematic artefact (film or video), the operational term being 'constructing', as opposed to merely 'recording'. "The process or technique of filming successive drawings or positions of puppets or models to create an illusion of movement when the film is shown as a sequence" (OED 2010. Sv 'animation').

Animator. The term 'animator' is ambiguous as it is used to refer to a range of creatives involved in the production of animated footage. I will use the term to refer to the 'artist working in animation' who handles all creative aspects of a film from script to direction and editing.

Auteur. Although 'auteur' does derive from the French word for 'author', the term has acquired a distinctive meaning in English. Auteur refers to an artist and is most often used to refer to filmmakers. The auteur maintains subjective stylistic control over most aspects of a collaborative artwork, exercising creative control comparable to that of an author when writing a novel or a play.

Disrupted-image animation. Disrupted-image animation is a term I coined to include to any animation process or technique which disrupts the ideology of 'hyperrealism' in animation by avoiding smooth naturalistic movement, disrupting continuity, and changing frame rates. It wants to show, often explicitly, that the animated film is made up of individual images, the production of which does not adhere to a smooth, logical timeline in the production process.

Experimental animation. Regarding art, the term 'experimental' is a tautology in the sense that the result of artistic activity cannot be anticipated, and thus cannot be anything but experimental. However, the term experimental animation is applied so regularly to refer to unconventional, non-commercial approaches to animated filmmaking that it is pointless to resist the term, and I will be using it in that sense. However, I do resist the equating of 'experimental' with 'abstract', which tends to surface in theory on animation.

Metamorphosis. The transitioning of one shape into another is a fundamental aspect of animation on various levels, as is discussed in Chapter 3. In metamorphosis' most basic application, it refers to the creation of the illusion of animated movement, and the changing of form. The verb 'to morph' is often used to refer to an object undergoing metamorphosis, I will be using 'to transform' where required as I find the definition of 'to morph' to refer too specifically to a process of visual metamorphosis using digital technology.

Pixilation. This term is not to be confused with pixelation, which refers to the breaking up of a digital image into pixels, the smallest digital picture element. Pixilation refers to a method of animation which entails the frame-by-frame recording of real objects/people by deliberately staging and manipulating their movements, achieving a quirky illusion of movement unlike, and impossible to achieve, by real-time photography.

Plasmaticness/plasmaticity: Developed by Sergei Eisenstein in the 1940s to theorise the appeal of the 'rubberised', elastic figures found in the early animated films of Walt Disney. Plasmaticness refers to two aspects of the animated image: First, the organic ability and ease with which the animated object or image can assume any form, and second the elasticity with which drawn figures or characters can move by virtue of its freedom from the laws of physics – squashing, stretching, expanding and contracting without regard for the physical possibility of such contortions in the real world.

Poetry-film. Poetry-film, poetryfilm, Film/Poem, film-poem, videopoetry, cinepoem, cinépoem are all terms used to refer to endless variants of the film concerned in some way with poetry or even with a 'poetic approach' to filmmaking. For the sake of clarity, and since it is the term which is used to refer to the kind of films I am researching – that of a film made of

a pre-existing poem, written by a poet other than the filmmaker – I will be using the term poetry-film throughout.

Chapter 1: Introduction

> There are poems and there are films and there are poems which are said to have shape and movement like a film and films which are said to have a poetic quality. But is there a new art form which combines qualities traditionally associated with poetry and/or film and manifests itself in the form of one or the other but which can be truly said to be a unique hybrid of the two? Does the film-poem really exist? (Maclennan 1996:3)[1]
>
> Animation is everything that people have called animation in the different historical periods (Bendazzi 2008:[sp]).
>
> *ut pictura poesis* (Horace 19 BCE).

This practice-driven research study investigates narrative strategy in the creation of animated poetry-film. This research is based on my production of two lyrical animated poetry-films and explores two diametrically opposite creative approaches to constructing lyrical visual narratives. The first is the process of metamorphosis, in which the film originates and grows organically from the first empty frame to the last through a process of constant transformation. In the second process, the film is constructed with hindsight from pre-existing parts. In both cases, the interdependence is examined between embodied activity and conceptual activity, between tacit and explicit knowledge in the creative act. The conceptual, theoretical, technical and creative approaches used in the making of the films are considered. At the same time, the conventional production hierarchy for the independent auteur animator is reconfigured: The intricate question of authorship of the animated poetry-film is examined by considering the multiple levels of additional content and meaning-making that are revealed in the production process.

1.1 Background to the study

This research was instigated by personal pre-occupations in my artistic practice. In my own praxis, I have been pre-occupied with making animated poetry-film since 2009. I was approached to make animated films to accompany a poetry-based theatre production. I found the form a natural fit for an artist from a fine art background who

---

[1] As quoted by Speranza (2002), from a brochure called 'Cross-Cuts', released to accompany a programme of poetry-related film screenings in conjunction with the literature education programme at the South Bank Centre in London in 1996.

works with animation. Painting and lyrical poetry have a similar approach to narrative as both deal with a set of abstracted concepts rather than with storylines. Commenting on animation as a contemporary art form, animation pioneer Robert Breer writes that he intends for his films "to not only bear repeated viewings but to almost require it" (Breer in Vanderbeek 1961:13). He regards his films as related to the plastic arts in lacking a dramatic outcome associated with narrative film and being more formal in structure. As a medium of expression within the plastic arts, animation aims to appeal directly to the viewer's senses rather than telling a story, and in so doing shares an approach to narrative with non-temporal graphic media.

Poetry-film is not regarded as a genre within the canon of animated film.[2] Therefore, I approach animated poetry-film on the one hand as a sub-genre of poetry-film, and on the other hand as a mode of creative expression within the visual arts field. I focus on the formal design aspects and technical processes, such as the process by which the visual elements of an animated poetry-film are conceived, given material form, filmed, and taken through the post-production process to a final film. The narrative agility of animation presents the possibility of animation to be applied as a semiotic system that communicates content visually in tandem with lyrical text. My experience in the field instigates the notion of animation as the most suitable medium for creating poetry-film. In poetry, language is manipulated in various ways, often resulting in its own grammar and own vocabulary to some extent (Riffaterre 1980: 1). Similarly, the animated poetry-film constructs meaning by manipulating and juxtaposing imagery, movement, and sound.

Theoretical research in animation in South Africa is limited, partly because the local industry is small, and partly because animation training in South Africa is primarily vocational and focussed courses in the medium are sparse[3]. Research in applied animation as an instructional tool (Moremoholo 2008) or educational aid (Pithouse-Morgan, Van Laren, Mitchell & Singh 2015) occurs in education or medical faculties, for

---

2 The guiding theory on genre in animation is by Wells (2002:41–71) who bases his classification on the particularity of animation, and its own conditions of enunciation.

3 The Department of Digital Arts at UKZN offers focussed courses in 3D, 2D and experimental animation practice and theory up to the PhD level, and the University of the Witwatersrand offers courses up to MA level in digital animation.

example. Research into animation as an artistic and philosophical endeavour occurs in arts-related disciplines like fine arts departments (Unisa and the Universities of Pretoria and Witwatersrand)[4] and centres for film and media studies (Universities of Cape Town and KwaZulu-Natal).[5]

This research endeavours to extend the established boundaries of animation production in South Africa due to animation's inherent experimental approach and push boundaries in poetry-film by presenting animation as a preferred mode of filmmaking. This research further aims to expand the practice of narrative strategies in the creation of animated poetry-films by analysing and theorising the processes involved in creating films.

This study is the first to be done within the South African context on animated poetry-film. The anticipated audience for this research is animation practitioners who work with poetry-film or other forms of literary adaption, artists in experimental practice who use non-linear narratives, and scholars of animation and poetry-film studies.

1.2 Research problems

The first concern of this study is the double hybrid nature of the animated poetry-film that complicates both its production and its reception. Animated film and poetry- film are both hybrid media, fusing visual imagery, text, sound and movement into multimodal forms of artistic expression.

On the one hand, within poetry-film as a genre, animation as a medium for generating visual material must be acknowledged as fundamentally distinct from using real-time recorded[6] footage. The animation method and material construction of the visual component of the film is significant in the creation of meaning. This embodied activity has to be acknowledged as a decisive act of authoring in the creation of poetry-film and cannot be regarded as subservient to the literary content of the film. The poetry-film is often regarded as a genre of literature rather than film, and in particular the technical specifics of filmmaking and animation are overlooked.

---

4 (Universities of South Africa, Pretoria and Witwatersrand; Luneburg (2017); Penn (2009).
5 (De Beer 2014) and (Stewart 2016)
6 Or 'live-action' footage if one must.

On the other hand, the specific literary source or inspiration for a film is hardly ever used as a genre-specifying factor within animation as a medium. Many significant animated films, with poems as original source, have been created and are seldom billed as 'poetry-film'; the specific nature of the literary source is incidental. Over the past two decades poetry-film as a medium has grown exponentially, and I argue for the animated poetry-film to be regarded as a genre[7] of poetry-film.

The second concern of this study is with the question of authorship. A poem is not a script, and as with any adaptation of a literary work to film, additional authoring is required. Often animated films based on lyrical poetry would use a screenplay that employs a more conventional narrative than the one transmitted by the text alone. The animated poetry-film thus often contains multiple 'texts'. Such a combination of visual and literary text makes for new meaning that goes beyond the illustration of the ideas and words of a poet. The presence of a 'second text'[8] in poetry-film highlights the issue of authorship of the poetry-film, and this is a hotly debated theme within the poetry-film arena[9]. Apart from scriptwriting, animated poetry-film requires additional instances of authoring in terms of visual style and process of animation. Focussing on the inherent intermedial nature of the poetry-film, I argue for the animator to be regarded as auteur of the animated poetry-film that negates a stance of double or co-authoring. This view will be substantiated by accentuating the instances of re-narration and additional authoring involved in the process of producing an animated poetry-film.

To argue the aforementioned positions, I demonstrate how animated poetry-film is different from poetry-film that uses live-action or found footage. This demonstration will elucidate the multi-faceted production processes involved in making an animated poetry-film, and the range of additional authoring processes required.

The conceptual aspects of the film making process require that the following questions be asked: What are the formal similarities between poetry and animation and how can

---

7 I use the term 'genre' rather loosely, and my purpose is to shed light on the manner and process of construction of the poetry-film rather than on its subject matter.

8 A 'second text' of course also implies a possible third, and fourth in a multi-disciplinary medium

9 The authorship debate is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2 (pp 33 and 34)

such similarities be harnessed to create a symbiosis – a hybrid form to communicate content using the strengths of both, providing a multimodal poetic experience? How does narrative function within lyrical poetry, and how does the animator apply or adjust this functioning when authoring a script for the poetry-film? How do the specific abilities of animation lend itself to enhance and expand upon the lyrical narrative? Is the formulation of a visual narrative strategy determined by the text, or is it dependent on the artist's individual style? How does the poetic text influence the animator's choice of visual narrative strategy and visual style? How are the intrinsic aspects of style, medium and method instrumental in the enhancing of the meaning of the text, and how does it create new added meaning in the film? Is it possible to suggest a model(s) of praxis that can be applied when constructing an animated film based on a pre-existing lyrical poem[10]? These are multi-facetted questions inherently linked to the creative process which are here explored through practice as research.

1.3 Aims and objectives

The main aim of this research is to investigate the narrative possibilities of unconventional approaches in manual moving-image production by exploring two medium-specific narrative strategies. Essentially, the study aims to argue that animated poetry-film is a particular genre of poetry-film in which the particular production processes of animation play a definitive role in the creation of meaning in the resulting poetry/film hybrid artefact. A further central aim is to reconfigure, modify and expand the notions of authorship in the poetry-film by way of the technical and material processes of the making of the poetry-film and its narrative structures.

---

[10] The reception of the animated poetry-film is potentially problematic, especially within the persisting perception of animation as primarily a medium of entertainment. The non-linear structure of narrative in lyrical poetry, when reflected in the poetry-film, complicates comprehension if a film is viewed with conventional narrative expectations. A hybrid art form cannot be ruled by an existing set of criteria derived from only one of the disciplines comprising the hybrid. For a hybrid art form to exist, all aspects of all the elements of the hybrid should be acknowledged and respected. For the poetry-film, it means that both the criteria for poetry and the multiple criteria for animated film should be taken into account in the reception of a film.

The main research objective is to demonstrate the divergent processes involved in making animated poetry-film by making two poetry-films in which two diametrically opposed narrative strategies are employed, namely metamorphosis and editing.

I will demonstrate that as an overarching narrative approach metamorphosis is a strategy for creating movement, editing technique, and a strategy for the alteration of form. I will focus on straight-ahead[11] animation on a solid base, a technical process evident in the work of William Kentridge (South Africa) and Jake Fried (United States), among others. I used this approach in my own film *Mon Pays* (Grobler 2017). This narrative strategy aims to present the poetry-film as an open-ended interpretation of the poem and suggests that the reading of the poem also remain a fluid process of metamorphosis.

The objective with the investigation of editing as a narrative strategy pertains to constructing a film from a database of pre-produced moving imagery, with specific attention to disrupted image animation. 'Disrupted-image animation' refers to processes in which the idealised smooth transitions between frames and continuous naturalistic movement of conventional animation is consciously discarded for expressive purposes. These processes will be demonstrated with reference to the work of Sasha Svirski (Russia), Cornelia Parker (United Kingdom), and Paul Bush (United Kingdom). A range of media, techniques, and approaches is used in my film *Parys suite to* construct a database of animatic material. The film's focus is on exploring animation as a semantic system by which meaning is constructed through how the animatic database material is manipulated and applied using horizontal and vertical editing.

This thesis presents new visual work capturing possible methodologies for the creation of animated poetry-films. The thesis includes documentation and a critical analysis of production processes and methods and the films created through these processes. The research is not focussed on explaining the contents (or meaning) of the films created (or

---

[11] 'Straight-ahead' is an animation term that refers to the method by which only the first key pose of a character is used and movement is constructed frame by frame as production progresses. The more common method of animation is to divide a sequence into key positions that are drawn first and then 'inbetween frames' are filled in to complete the movement.

the poems on which they are based), but rather on exploring material processes through which meaning is created visually to reflect on or converse with the meaning conveyed in the literary text.

1.4 Literature review

Poetry-film as a medium is multidisciplinary, intermedial, multimodal, and poetry-film is also fairly young as a film genre, and thus under-theorised. Animation as a medium is similarly complex and has seen a proliferation of theoretical study since the 1990s. Animation is also complex in terms of the variety of its applications, and study in the field is widespread across its many aspects. Animated poetry-film is not widely regarded as a genre of animation, poetry-film or literature, and thus severely under-theorised. Thus, it was necessary to draw from various related fields of study to research the matters at hand, and few addressed the field of animated poetry-film directly.

In terms of animation theory, Paul Wells, in various books (Wells 1998, 2002, 2007; Wells & Hardstaff 2008) addresses the entire spectrum of animated film and provides a valuable broad basis as a point of departure. His work is instrumental in categorising animation and situating my own praxis within the broad spectrum of the discipline. I use Wells' classification of narrative strategies in animation as set out in *Understanding Animation* (1998) as a guide when identifying the specific set of narrative devices to be examined in my praxis.

Ülo Pikkov (2010) and Maureen Furniss (1998) explore aspects of animated film that are pertinent to poetry-film – structure, time, and sound – and two aspects pertinent to visual narrative strategy – visual style and aesthetics in animation. As practising filmmaker and academic, Pikkov (2010, 2018) offers valuable insights into the relationship between animation production process and media and how meaning is generated through the physical process of animating.

Eliane Gordeeff (2018) who is also both animator and theorist, demonstrates how the material aspects of a film and the process of construction create embedded meaning in the image that is more complex and meaningful than the image itself. Gordeeff (2018:150) suggests a relationship between meaning, medium, and process that echoes my own view on the relationship between materiality and visual information, which is

that “[t]he act of animating is, in itself, representativeness and sequencing of movement” (Gordeeff 2018:44).

Gordeeff (2018) also provides valuable insight into the nature of narrative as it pertains to the animated poetry-film. Narrative is often perceived as belonging to language, both oral and textual. Oral narrative is immediate and transitory and is a discourse without an accurate record. Oral narrative can be forgotten or misrepresented. Textual narrative resists the passage of time, can be reread and confirmed by many readers over time. Visual and audio-visual narratives work in various forms and time frames, creating a strong link with reality since “its identification is directly linked to the visual and auditory references of the world that we know. The time in which it occurs is that of its projection … one gets the impression that it happens at the moment in which it is seen” (Gordeeff 2018:39). The directness of audio-visual narration that is temporal and does not allow reflection is contrasted with textual narration that can be re-read and deciphered. In the poetry-film, visual and oral (+textual) narration functions simultaneously and has implications in meaning transmission.

Although my praxis focusses on the medium of animation, the specific nature of the format – poetry-film – requires a rather broad range of references, ranging from the practical aspects of animation as an art form to intermedial studies and narratology. I limited my research on narrative theory to the *Living Handbook of Narratology* (https://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/index.html) to contain the scope of the study and referred back to the extensive range of articles contained in it with regard to narratological definitions and principles. The work of Peter Hühn (Huhn & Sommer 2013; Huhn 2005) is valuable and insightful, particularly his view on forms of narration in poetry. Marie-Laure Ryan’s (2003) essay of the theoretical foundations of transmedial narratology specifically guided me in forming my own views on narrative in poetry-film.

Poetry-film as praxis is reliant on continuing and current conversations via blogs, social media, and poetry-film festivals and conventions to a large extent.

The views and manifestoes of film-poem pioneer Tom Konyves (2012; 2015; 2017; 2018 and 2019) are useful and informative as a broad guide for constructing a film-poem and the conventional view on the medium. He tends to become prescriptive about what is allowed in film-poems (his preferred term) and the supposed predetermined meaning of

certain technical processes. Therefore, his views are also of value to me as they represent an approach from which I differ on some technical and ideological issues[12].

In various articles, Fin Harvor (2017) approaches vidoepoetry or the film-poem from a literary perspective, putting poetry first – which in my opinion negates the claim of a hybrid art form. This tendency to put the poetry first seems to prevail within the greater poetry-film community, and I wish to present a counter-argument[13].

I find the work of filmmaker-academics Fil Ieropolous (2010) and Alistair Cook (2010, 2017) sober and inclusive of various approaches to the hybrid art form. The poetry-film community is fairly active in the United Kingdom and Germany. Three blogs have proven very informative about current debates and conferences regarding poetry-film. *Poetry Film Live* (http://poetryfilmlive.com/) features articles and essays by various prominent practitioners and academics in the field. *Filmpoem* (http://filmpoem.com/) is an artists' moving-image project founded by Scottish artist Alastair Cook and is less formal and academic. Cook is extensively involved in education about and propagation of poetry-film as an art form. The German publication *Poetryfilm Kanal* (poetryfilm.de) is an online magazine (with occasional print copies) that publishes short articles and interviews with artists in both German and English. Although less academic, articles are on key issues by artists and academics directly involved in making or researching poetry-film.

The value of video streaming platforms like Vimeo and YouTube cannot be overestimated. The role of the two platforms in publishing and distributing video content is enormous and gave me access to films that would otherwise have been difficult to find. These include all non-commercial films by independent filmmakers who are able to self-publish and distribute their work via these channels.

On the topic of *animated* poetry-film as a genre of poetry-film, hardly any literature exists. I consulted texts on animation and poetry to establish a structural similitude between the two forms. Animation theorists Ülo Pikkov, Paul Wells, Eliane Gordeeff,

---

12 In his *Videopoetry: a manifesto* (2011), Konyves ascribes certain specific values and meanings to technical aspects of the filmmaking process, and is at times prescriptive about what is allowed in the poetry-film, which I find problematic.

13 This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, pages 31 to 33.

Maureen Furniss, among others, draw comparisons between animation and poetry in terms of semantic structure and aspects of musicality. Curiously, most of these writers seem to avoid the concept of lyrical narrative when delineating a hierarchy of narrative types in animation. Experimental animation is often equated with abstraction of form. In the discussion of his three classifications of animation – orthodox, developmental, and abstract, Wells (1998:46–51) discusses three films as case studies for 'non-objective' and 'non-linear' animation. The first is an abstract film by Len Lye. The other two films use an overall disjointed narrative structure, which nevertheless consists of narrative fragments in which linearity is retained. Similarly, in Hannes Rall's (2020) recent publication on literary adaptation for animation, he uses mainly narrative poetry as case studies. I used Daniel Yacavone's (2018) views on cinesemiotics as a basis for exploring animation as a semiotic system, which deductions I applied to animated poetry-film.

As basic primary sources, my own films *Mon Pays* and *Parys suite* are central to the study. This practice-driven study is about the processes of its physical and conceptual construction. In relation to *Mon Pays,* I examine the processes of metamorphosis in the work of William Kentridge (South Africa) with reference to *Mine* (Kentridge 1991) and *Mind Frame* (Fried 2016) by animator Jake Fried (America). In relation to *Parys suite,* I examine the work of animators working in disruptive techniques, namely *Election Abstract* (2017) by Cornelia Parker (United Kingdom) and *While Darwin Sleeps* (2004) by Paul Bush (United Kingdom). With regard to a general approach to the practice of animated poetry-film, I examined *Hate For Sale* (2017) by animator Anna Eijsbouts (Holland), and *9 Ways to Draw a Person* (2015) by Sasha Svirsky (Russia).

From a technical point of view, various sources are used as applicable to the specifics of animated poetry-film. Gilles Deleuze's theory on the time-image as seen through the eyes of film theorists John Mullarkey (2010), Felicity Colman (2011), and Thomas Poell (2004) formed a basis for my approach to editing. Lucy Fischer's (1999) book on film theory placed editing within a structured historical context. Michel Chion (1994) and Stephen Deutsch (2007) were valuable for their different perspectives on using sound in film in general, while Robin Beauchamp (2005) had a more technical and practical approach to sound for animation in particular.

The relationship between poetry and film, and poetry and animation is not a new one, and in his lecture *From the cinema of poetry to the poetry of cinema,* Tom Konyves (2019) expands on the love-hate relationship between filmmakers and the concept of poetry in film over the course of the first half of the twentieth century. Konyves quotes Dziga Vertov who, while describing himself as a film poet, calls for the "complete separation from the language of theatre and literature" (Konyves 2019:2). The historical trail of the relationship between film, animation, and poetry is multi-faceted and complex. The relationship has also been recorded and theorised extensively by various writers[14] and while this historical trail is acknowledged, it is not explored here in any depth as it has no direct bearing on the aims and objectives of the study. This study is a response to the rapid expansion of poetry-film as a distinctive medium over the past two decades, and my own positioning within the field.

1.5 Methodology

This thesis is the result of inductive interpretation while using a qualitative research method. In this practice-driven study, a phenomenological approach was taken using various methods of data collection, including the analysis of audio-visual artworks, texts, and images. In view of the praxis-driven nature of the research, the approach can be viewed as ethnographic and based on the artist's creative involvement in the field of poetry-film for at least a decade. The two films produced during this study, *Mon Pays* and *Paris suite,* are presented as case studies that are explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive of the theory and processes of narrative strategies in animated poetry-film.

In this research through art, three aspects of the art-making process are considered:

- The artwork as object refers to the animated poetry-film as a multimedium hybrid that bridges a divide between literature and the fine arts.
- Art making as process refers to the multi-faceted and multimedia production processes involved in making a poetry-film. I will be doing a critical, self-reflexive analysis of my own practice to develop a creative body of work that will enable theoretical reflection. This analysis will include qualitative observation and record keeping of all of the processes – both practical and cognitive – involved in creating

[14] Phil Ieropolous in *Film Poetry: a historical perspective ([Sa.])*, and Stefanie Orphal in *Poesiefilm* (2015) amongst others,

the films. Assuming the role of Schön's reflective practitioner[15] will entail drawing on a repertoire of routines, memories, and frames of reference to build theories through using inductive inference, where the "familiar situation functions as a precedent, or a metaphor, or … an exemplar for the unfamiliar one" (Schön 1983:138). Wayne (2001:30) places the extent to which the practitioner can be self-conscious about their practice on an overlapping continuum and described by specific domains: "process of production, the text itself and the context of production and consumption". Ward (2006:234) identifies at the one end of this continuum the 'reflexive practitioner' who reflects on the production process and tends to focus on the technical details and neglects other factors. By contrast, the theoretical practitioner tends to focus on the text as the site of meaning. I aim to be a critical practitioner, combining the reflexive and theoretical practitioner to demonstrate the interdependence of theory and practice.

- The functioning of the artwork within context refers to the uncertain positioning of the animated poetry-film on a cultural continuum somewhere between literature and the fine arts. A phenomenological approach to art would have us considering the artwork not just of itself, but also in terms of the reception of the artwork. Wolfgang Iser (1972:279) ascribes two poles to the artwork[16] – the artistic and the aesthetic. 'The artistic' refers to the text created by the author, while 'the aesthetic' refers to the reception by the reader or viewer. This polarity means that the artwork is not completely identical to either the text or the realisation of the text, but lies somewhere in between. Justin Buchanan (2016) suggests a heterophenomenological approach as a possible way of using "a subjective record of internal experience as a reliable instrument for the conveyance of that experience to a third party" (Buchanan 2016:20, 21). Such an approach enables the films made in this study to represent the conditions of their production. The two films represent the transferral of knowledge that is largely tacit and ineffable and made explicit to some extent through the documented and theorised processes of production. Aspects of the work will remain ineffable and can be accessed and revealed to some extent through reflection and through the processes of exhibition (Buchanan 2016:20, 21).

---

[15] Donald Schön developed the idea of the reflective practitioner highlighting the importance 'knowledge in action' alongside 'knowledge on reflection'.

[16] Iser refers to literary text specifically, which I extend to include all text (content) whatever the material or embodied medium.

On the motivation of art-making as research, Chris Jones (2013:226–240) argues for the establishment of a pluralistic research-based paradigm that would require the embracing of the inherent experimental nature of art practice. A move from 'knowledge on reflection ' to 'knowledge in action' supposes "that practical activity is itself intrinsically intelligent. It supposes thinking through art" (Jones 2013:227).

The Research Assessment Exercise defines research as:

> original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes … the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes (RAE 2005:34).

From this definition Henk Borgdorff (2010) derives the following criteria for practice-driven research in the arts:

> (1) The investigation should be *intended* as research …
> (2) Research involves *original* contributions …
> (3) The aim is to enhance *knowledge and understanding* …
>
> We can hence speak of research in the arts only when the practice of art delivers an intended, original contribution to what we know and understand" (Borgdorff 2010:8, 9).

Since practise-based research in the arts can only be done by artists and thus distinguishing it from mainstream scholarly research, Borgdorff asserts that artists have privileged access to the research domain "because artistic creative processes are inextricably bound up with the creative personality, and with the individual, the sometimes idiosyncratic gaze of the artist, research like this can best be performed 'from within'" (Borgdorff 2010:16). The nature of knowledge in the arts and the enhancement of understanding thereof is complicated by its often tacit nature.

Tacit knowledge cannot readily be widely disseminated. However, Karl Polanyi (1962) believes that all knowledge has both an explicit or theoretical, and tacit dimension. The tacit dimension is a "personal coefficient, which shapes all factual knowledge, bridg[ing] in doing so the disjunction between subjectivity and objectivity" (Polanyi 1962: 17), and not limited to non-scientific disciplines. Kristina Niedderer and Yassaman Imani (2008) pose that implicit knowledge can be made explicit to some extent through explanation and description, and is therefore partially transferable.

The transference of tacit knowledge is complicated as it requires a relationship of mentoring or coaching between the expert and the learner. Although practice-based research in the arts has to be performed by artists, the research aims to have a broader significance than that of the researcher's own practice. The research incorporates experimentation as a fundamental approach in practice and in the interpretation of that practice.

1.6 The praxis

For the auteur filmmaker, the creation of an animated poetry-film poses both intellectual and practical challenges due to the amalgamation of divergent processes that such an endeavour entails.

I aim to unpack and analyse these processes and their underlying theories as they were encountered in the production of my films, taking into account the following:

- The selection of the poetry text, the analyses of the chosen text, the establishment of its meaning/significance, and the translation of the literary meaning into visual concepts.
- The conception of a screenplay for a film in which the visual concepts are communicated using visual narrative strategies.
- The creation of visual material required to communicate such visual concepts.
- The manipulation and recording of said visual material over time, synchronised to the verbal/audio representation of the poetic text.
- The post-production combination of visual material, text, sound, and music to create a cinematic film.

The praxis consists of two animated poetry-films I conceived and produced through two diametrically opposite creative processes. The films will be displayed on an online platform to focus on the content and construction, and not on the mode of its display. This approach to presentation accentuates the temporal nature and narrative structure of the poetry-film – that of having a beginning and an end and being of a specific fixed duration. This approach to presentation is consciously opposed to video installation in which the video is often presented as infinite (looping continually), and relies on the scale and condition of its display for much of its effect.

The catalogue documents and archives the processes of research and production, and will also be presented on an online platform. The online presentation will be a dedicated website that will function as the site of exhibition. Links to the films and thesis document will ensure that the entire study is available through a single digital location.

1.7 Overview of chapters

In Chapter 1, I provide an introduction to and brief overview of this practice-driven study. Research problems are identified, and the aims and objectives of the study is explained.

In Chapter 2, I circumscribe the three main elements of the study – animation, poetry-film and narrative – to establish a theoretical base for the broad premises of my thesis, which are the specific significance of animation in the genre of poetry-film and the role of the animator as auteur of the poetry-film. A continuum of cinematic image types veering between abstraction and mimesis is suggested to curb the expansive scope of animation as a medium without imposing limitations on the creative applications of media. In terms of the reception of the animated poetry-film, I argue for the animated poetry-film to be 'allowed in the gallery' and viewed as a mode of fine/visual arts. As an inherently multi and intermedial discipline, animation's impact is explained as an accumulation of conceptual and practical processes of production. I explore the ability of animation to function as a semiotic system and how animation constructs meaning through making.

In Chapter 3, I research metamorphosis as an inherent quality of and driving force within animation with reference to the work of William Kentridge (South Africa), Jake Fried (America), and my own film *Mon Pays*. Metamorphosis has multiple applications in animation. Among the application possibilities are that metamorphoses can be applied as devices for the creation of movement, the evolution of form, as practical animation processes and in terms of meaning, and as metaphor. On a structural level, metamorphosis can be used as an integrated editing process, structuring narrative through the animation process itself. Narrative devices related to metamorphosis as narrative strategy are examined. Using my film *Mon Pays,* I also examine metamorphosis as a thought process for the use of embodied free association and stream of consciousness in the process of creation.

In Chapter 4, I address how the conventional animation production process differs from the independent auteur production, specifically in the animated poetry-film. I discuss the selection of an appropriate poem for visual interpretation and the additional instances of authoring that such an adaptation requires. Using metamorphosis as narrative strategy, the production processes are explored as experienced in the production of *Mon Pays*.

In Chapter 5, I discuss editing as a process of narrative construction (as opposed to editing as a post-production ordering process). I examine narrative construction from a database filmmaking approach. In database filmmaking, filmic sequences are constructed from a database of pre-produced clips, stills and live footage, through methods of sequential and vertical editing (compositing). While database filmmaking can use various techniques and processes, I focus on four related processes that resist the orthodox approach to animation as an attempt to simulate naturalistic movement. Videoclips created through these processes of disrupted-image animation are often experimental and favour a collage aesthetic. I will be examining three films in which disruptive techniques are used as narrative strategy, as they relate to my own use of such techniques*,* namely *While Darwin Sleeps* (Bush 2004) by Paul Bush (United Kingdom), *Election Abstract* (Parker 2017) by Cornelia Parker (United Kingdom), and *9 Ways to Draw a Person* (Svirsky 2015) by Sasha Svirsky (Russia). I will examine my film *Parys suite* (Grobler 2018) for its use of disrupted techniques and in terms of editing as narrative strategy for determining both the appearance and the significance of the film.

In Chapter 6 I explore database filmmaking as it features in various incarnations in the multi-faceted film *Parys Suite* (Grobler 2018). The various movements in the film are analysed to demonstrate the specific application of four disrupted-image animation techniques: Time-lapse photography, pixilation, flickerfilm and kinestasis. I analyse editing as narrative strategy for its power of creating associative relationships. The role of the narrative devices of condensation, synecdoche, metaphor, acting, choreography and sound in editing as narrative strategy in Parys suite is demonstrated.

In Chapter 7, I present a conclusion to the study by reflecting on the suitability of the two devised narrative strategies for the production of animated poetry-film; the relevance of the production processes followed in the making of the films and for

making animated poetry-films in general; and the status of the animator as auteur of the animated poetry-film.

Chapter 2: Defining animated poetry-film and determining theoretical frameworks

The main aim of this chapter is to investigate existing and developing theories and definitions of poetry-film and how animation features within the context of the medium. Poetry-film can be regarded as an experimental genre of both film and poetry. In my view, poetry-film is an experimental approach to animation and is the most effective way to meld the literature-film hybrid. My praxis is exploratory of the possibilities of animation in the creation of lyrical poetry-film. In this chapter, I delineate my practical approach to animation within that context. I will argue for the importance of positioning animation within the spectrum of fine art practices as a medium of artistic expression and philosophical thought[1]. The extensive presence of animation within the commercial contexts of entertainment, and the various utilitarian applications of the medium tend to undermine the perception of animation as a form of artistic expression.

Despite animation entailing unique and vastly different production processes from live-action and found-footage[2] methods, animated poetry-film is afforded little attention in academic discussion on poetry-film. The animation process as a meaning-making activity, independent of (and complementary to) the poetry text will be addressed. Dan Torre argues for a less technical, and more philosophical approach when describing animation processes, so that "animation becomes less about the end product, and more about the process of its becoming" (Torre 2014:50).

2.1 Intermediality as a point of departure

Both poetry-film and animation are intermedial and multimodal, and due to advances in technological development of digital domains, increased access to various production processes breaks down barriers within media. Cindy Sherman (2005:190) refers to the phenomenon of intermediality as a result of artists (as a media-free collective term)

---

1 Ward (in Bradbury 2006:239) states that "animation's identity has been fractured by its need to attach itself [and] locate its practice within other commercial industries".

2 Democratisation of technology has led to video art becoming one of the key contemporary artistic disciplines, making liberal use of the appropriation of 'found footage' via social media and video-streaming platforms like YouTube (Onetti 2017).

transgressing the borders and constraints between individual, media-specific practices: “The desire to redefine the boundaries of artistic expression has involved collaboration, interaction, and the redefinition of strategies, aesthetics, and audience”. Daniel Albright (2014) finds the separation of the arts into media categories problematic, since every attempt to interpret or find meaning in an artwork necessitates the crossing of divides between media, usually into that of the realm of language. Albright defines the intermedial artwork as an (imaginary) artwork generated by the spectator through observation of the interplay between various media. The role of the spectator or reader in the conception of the intermedial nature of the artwork is significant as this approach to the multimodal functioning of the artwork is aimed at the effectiveness of communication between the artist/artwork and the viewer. The aim of description and verbal analysis is the enabling of comprehension, and therefore the existence of artwork is literally dependent on its availability for translation into language. An artwork “realises itself as art, not in the act of its being painted or being composed, but in the act of submitting itself as a subject for discoursing” (Albright 2014:217).

Lars Elleström (2010) also finds the division between media problematic and sees intermediality as “a complex set of relations between media that are always more or less multimodal” (Elleström 2010:37). There are two limitations in drawing comparisons between media that confuses. The first limitation is that the media compared are often treated as fundamentally different. Defining traits are shared by art forms and are often overlooked. Therefore, clarification about which aspects of the media are relevant to how these aspects are related is necessary when comparing media. The second limitation Elleström identifies in comparing media such as ‘dance’ and literature’ is that the “materiality of media is generally not distinguished from the perception of media” (Elleström 2010:15). The artwork and the perception of the artwork should be viewed as two theoretically different aspects of it. The materiality of a medium incorporates its coming into being – its process of construction. Viewing the medium without comprehension of its ‘coming into being’ cannot lead to a full understanding of it, and of how various media can be related because of similarities in their processes of construction. Such an interrelatedness exists between the coming into being of animation and that of poetry.

All media are to some extent multimodal, although individual media "has the capacity of mediating only certain aspects of the total reality … [media] in some respect include, for instance, both the visual and the auditory mode, both the iconic and the symbolic mode, or both the spatial and the temporal mode " (Elleström 2010:24). All media are necessarily realised in all four modalities – material, sensorial, spatiotemporal and semiotic[3] – and for the character of any medium to be fully grasped, all four of these modalities must be considered. In *Laocoon: an essay upon the limits of painting and poetry,* Gotthold Lessing (1887) argues for clear distinctions between painting and poetry, claiming that visual art and literature originates in various spatial and temporal conditions, discounting Horace's tradition of '*ut pictura poesis'* (as is painting so is poetry). Elleström (2010:24, 25) regards Lessing's assertions as normative, qualifying aspects of the arts of time and space and not concerned with the basic aspects of media, but rather with the semiotic differences between them. The specific definition of the semiotic character of a qualified medium is for Elleström of lesser importance than the necessity that it must include semiotic differences that are at least partly media specific. An acknowledgement is required that there are fundamental differences in how auditive, visual, and literary media produce meaning. Eisenstein ascribes Lessing's insistence on the necessity of boundaries between the visual and verbal arts to the fact that "in Lessing's day neither Edison nor Lumière had yet supplied him with that most perfect apparatus for research and assessment of the aesthetic principles of art: the cinematograph" (Eisenstein in Konyves 2019:[sp]). Eisenstein views cinema as the perfect art form able to synthesise the principles of literature and visual arts.

---

[3] *Material modality*: "the latent corporeal interface of the medium. The material interface of television programmes and motion pictures, for instance, consists of a more or less flat surface of changing images (in a wide sense of the notion) combined with sound waves" (Elleström 2010:17).
Sensorial modality: "the physical and mental acts of perceiving the present interface of the medium through the sense faculties. Media cannot be realised: that is, cannot mediate, unless they are grasped by one or more of our senses" (Elleström 2010:17).
Spatiotemporal modality: "The spatiotemporal modality of media covers the structuring of the sensorial perception of sense-data of the material interface into experiences and conceptions of space and time" (Elleström 2010:18).
Semiotic modality: "The semiotic modality thus involves the creation of meaning in the spatiotemporally conceived medium by way of different sorts of thinking and sign interpretation … I thus propose that convention (symbolic signs), resemblance (iconic signs) and contiguity (indexical signs) should be seen as the three main modes of the semiotic modality" (Elleström 2010:22).

All media are mixed media from an observational or sensorial point of view. Pure media is an impossibility because of the constant intrusion of the senses upon one another. This intrusion of the senses does not mean that it is impossible to distinguish one medium from another. On the contrary, the intrusive senses enable a more precise differentiation of combinations of media.

Animation as an intermedial and multimodal discipline has the uncanny ability to absorb all other creative media while still retaining a definitive character, even when that character turns out to be incredibly multifaceted. The animator as practitioner needs to be able to control multiple media in order to create an animated film.

2.2 Animation

Defining animation in a way that encompasses all of its rapidly expanding and ever-changing parameters is problematic. In the preamble to its statute, the Association of International Film Animation (ASIFA) defines the art of animation simply as "the creation of moving images through the manipulation of all varieties of techniques apart from live-action methods".[4] Animation historian Gianalberto Bendazzi (2008:[sp]) suggests defining the discipline of animation using "everything that people have called animation in the different historical periods", because the meaning of the word has changed over the last 100 years, and is still constantly changing and evolving. Phil Denslow (1998:[sp]) points out that animation is defined according to the context in which it is used, including historical development, production and marketing requirements, distribution avenues, practical application, and aesthetic preference. Thus, every definition is constantly challenged by new developments in technology for production and distribution. A definition of the medium is dependent on the purpose for which the medium is to be applied. Within a creative media context, the definition should be as broad and encompassing as possible to avoid restricting the artist. Rather than attempting a more precise definition, it may be more helpful to place animation on a spectrum of cinematic image types.

---

[4] At this point I want to indicate a distinction between 'live-action methods' and the use of live-action footage as a 'lexical' element within an animated film. The former refers to the real-time recording of performed action, which is in direct contrast with the frame-by-frame construction of a sequence of moving images.

2.2.1 Animation on a spectrum/continuum

Janean Dill (2017:[sp]) and Paul Wells (1998:35) both identify three broad categories of animation based on stylistic approach, manner of execution, and conceptual intent. Dill (2017:[sp]) calls her categories 'cartoon', 'auteur', and 'experimental' animation. Wells (1998:35) identifies and describes two opposing poles, 'Orthodox' and 'experimental' animation, which represent the outer limits of the field. Everything in between these poles is referred to as 'developmental' animation. Both authors use the term 'experimental' to refer to work which has art-historical roots and "privileges the art of timing, rhythm, and pacing above-all-else" (Dill 2017:[sp]). Dill views experimental animation as a research-based model of fine art and focuses on experimentation, exploration, and personal expression as a means to itself. "Experimental animation points to nothing outside its own thought and manifestation, first and foremost"(Dill 2017:[sp]). At the opposing pole from experimental, Wells places orthodox animation, which would correspond to Dill's 'cartoon' category. Both mention the 12 principles of animation[5] as a governing factor in the creation of lifelike or realistic movement. Wells states terms and conditions that apply to orthodox animation and that references its ambition to mimic physical reality : Configuration, specific continuity, narrative form, evolution of content, unity of style, absence of the artist, and dynamics of dialogue (Wells 1998:35).

I take issue with both Wells and Dill on their use of the term 'experimental' to categorise an exploratory set of films because the term 'experimental' with regard to art is a tautology. Art cannot be anything but experimental in the sense that the result of the artist's activity cannot be anticipated. Donald Brook (2012:[sp]) points out that using 'experimental' in scientific terms denotes a situation in which "an experimenter purposefully deploys familiar sets of memes with the expectation of generating results that will falsify (or fail to falsify) some theory or hypothesis". Research in art is always aimed at a process of which the results are unpredicted or unpredictable. The history of

---

[5] The 12 principles of animation, formulated by Disney animators Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston (Thomas & Johnston 1994), aimed to produce more 'realistic' animation, meaning that objects and characters would appear to adhere to the laws of physics. The 12 principles are squash and stretch, anticipation, staging, straight ahead action and pose to pose, follow through and overlapping action, slow-in and slow-out, arc, secondary action, timing, exaggeration, solid drawing, appeal.

‘experimental animation’ follows a “narrative of investigation of the possibilities of re-purposing and adapting technologies to serve an artistic instinct” (Buchanan 2016:14). Experimentation in animation can be applied in all the multitude of disciplines present in the medium, from a mode of moving-image making to editing techniques, application of sound, and mode of display and application.

Applying the term ‘experimental’ to work that differs from the standard of narrative-based films fabricated through production-line procedures at commercial studios is to restrict animation to categories based only on two aspects of this multifaceted medium, namely narrative style and procedure of production. For example, the 2019 Oscar-winning animated feature *Spiderman: Into the Spiderverse* (Sony 2018) is characterised by extensive experimentation in terms of visual style, narrative construction and technical processes, yet it was produced by a commercial studio using production-line procedures. ‘Experimental animation’ has become too generic a term to accurately reflect any specific category of animated films to which it purports to refer.

Maureen Furniss (2007:5, 6) offers a more inclusive model for classifying animated tropes. She suggests circumscribing animation by placing it on a continuum of motion picture image types that take cognisance of the technological advances in motion picture production, causing a blurring of the lines between animation and live-action footage. She suggests using the terms mimesis and abstraction as the opposing tendencies, in that “’mimesis’ represents the desire to reproduce natural reality … while the term ‘abstraction’ describes using pure form – a suggestion of a concept rather than an attempt to explicate it in real life terms” (Furniss 2007:6). For Furniss the advantage of working with a continuum rather than with definitions is that “a continuum works with similarities to position items in relation to one another, while a definition seeks difference, to separate items in some way” (Furniss 2007:6). While taking cognisance of both Wells and Dill’s categorisations and requirements, I find Furniss’ continuum the most useful in this study because of its inclusivity. In my own work and the work of the other artists I discuss, liberal use is made of a combination of materials, techniques, and styles. The work would all be labelled ‘experimental’ with regard to design, narrative, production process, and execution. However, none of the films is abstract in terms of design or concept, and this would position them somewhere in Dill’s ‘auteur’, and Wells’ ‘developmental’ categories.

2.2.2 Positioning animation within the realm of the visual arts

Animation is a hybrid medium that requires an array of processes in both its construction and its reception (viewing). These processes are cognitive (conceptual), fundamentally intermedial, practical (in terms of production/manufacture), and technical (dependent on a wide scope of technological processes and devices for its construction and display). The animator is an artist-technician[6] who is forced by the complexities of the medium to follow a series of diverse technical production processes required in making a cultural product that is as intellectually grounded as the activities of any visual artist.

Animated film combines several art forms, posing challenges to the process of defining its essence, particularly the question of whether animation belongs to the category of film or visual art (Pikkov 2018:12). Although the medium of communication is film (with all the hybrid technological applications of the term), many animation artists are trained in art schools and not in film schools.[7] The most obvious example within a South African context is William Kentridge, a fine artist with international standing – achieved primarily through his animated films – and an auto-didact in terms of animation production[8].

For Wells (2002:66) the classification of animation as a version of 'fine art in motion' is important. Such a classification shifts the focus of genre in animation away from thematic and narrative concerns of live-action cinema towards a "practice informed by generic 'deep structures' [that] integrate and counterpoint form and meaning, and … reconcile approach and application as the essence of the art" (Wells 2002:66).

Many artist-animators work both in still formats, as well as expanding their explorations of temporality, often in the very same technical media. Kentridge presents his large

---

6 See my explication of the use of the term animator in the 'Glossary of key terms'.

7 In terms of auteur driven (non-commercial) animation productions, which is my point of departure, as set out in the introduction.

8 Other examples are Daandrey Steyn and Nathani Lüneburg , fine artists working with animation as an expressive medium in a fine art context. A younger generation of auteur animators are emerging, like Naomi van Niekerk and Erentia Bedeker, both of whom have a theatrical background and training. None of these artists have formal training as animators, and use animation as a creative means of expression, mastering the various technological processes as required for their specific personal expression.

charcoal drawings, after being laboured across for the sake of creating a sequence in a film, as conventional non-temporal artworks in a gallery or museum environment. Jake Fried regards his work as firmly rooted in the history of fine art, his works being 'objects of contemplation' in a similar way as a painting or sculpture.

Buchan (2007) observes that in lacking a commercial drive, the auteur animation film is more aligned with the fine arts than with conventional or 'orthodox' animation of Wells' (1998:35–38) classification. Auteur animation is personal and under the direct creative control of the artist. Many animators are practising fine artists using the time-based medium to expand the potential of their fine art practice "with a form of narrative over time that is distinct from the narrative of a single painting, sculpture, or installation" (Buchan 2007:2).

The positioning of animation within the field of the visual arts is important as it impacts on how the artwork is read. A visual-arts positioning calls for a contemplative gaze and intellectual involvement with the animated film in the way a viewer would engage with a painting or sculpture. Such an approach is essential in viewing animated poetry-film, as the medium does not adhere to orthodox viewer expectations regarding animated film. Animation pioneer Robert Breer positions his work within the fine arts rather than popular entertainment, and describes the viewing of his films as aligned with that of the viewing of conventional contemporary art:

> I intend for my films to not only bear repeated viewings but to almost require it and in this way. I suppose they are more related to the plastic arts than to literature. There is usually no denouement in my films in the usual dramatic sense but more of a formal structure appealing … directly to the senses (Robert Breer in Vanderbeek 1961:13).

Positioning animation within fine arts, and therefore within the gallery and art-museum space does present challenges. In terms of display, the positioning challenges the conventional museum and gallery format due to its temporal aspect. An animated film often requires specific circumstances for display – a darkened room, designated technology, silence in the case of films with a soundtrack. Animation installations with looping footage offer a solution, but limits the kind of work that can be displayed: Temporally specific works with a narrative structure and specific duration could be stunted when presented as an open installation where the viewer can enter and leave the exhibition space at any time. The animated film as a cultural product is also difficult

to commodify due to the nature of the medium that it shares with commercial animation and film. 'Fine art animation' is often published in limited prints and marketed via galleries to collectors at hefty prices compared to its commercial counterparts. Apart from the exclusivity that gallery status implies, it makes the film elitist and inaccessible or difficult to view or study by the general public. Kentridge's *10 Drawings for Projection* is not available online, save for clandestinely posted copies with poor picture and sound quality, and sometimes even with an altered soundtrack.[9]

The issue of materiality is an important distinction between animated film (or film/video as art form in general) and more conventional, non-temporal media. The filmic artwork ceases to exist when the power is switched off. A positive aspect is that the quality of the artwork is not necessarily compromised in a copy, such as when a facsimile of a painting is studied. The absence of its material presence impacts significantly on the experience of the viewer. With an audio-visual artwork like an animated film, there is no original,[10] only the version the spectator sees. The quality of the experience is dependent on secondary factors outside of the artwork – the quality of the projector (or another medium for viewing), the screen, scale of projection, and the venue in which it is viewed, among others. This immateriality of the artwork does compromise its acceptance within the 'art world' as it makes the work less available for commodification.

The issues of display and commodification mentioned above had a direct influence on the format in which I choose to exhibit the praxis from this study. The focus of this study is the films and the multiple processes involved in its production, not the gallery space and possible way in which temporal artworks might be most effectively displayed.

2.2.3 Animation: some underlying theories and principles

Since a precise definition for animation is difficult, one way is to attempt to circumscribe it in terms of some of its major underlying theories and principles. A major theory

---

[9] Kentridge's *10 Drawings for Projection* with poor sound and video quality:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vF5cngcXqSs
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T63P6tMQqt0&list=PL8A94F59712651F08&index=6

[10] Even though the artwork may have an original source – like the physically edited reel, or the digital files of the final digitally edited version, these are also merely documentation of the artwork's existence.

endorsing the functioning of animation is that of the 'persistence of vision' that was formulated by Mark Roget in 1824. His formulation was in relation to the optical illusion caused by the interrupted viewing (through vertical slits) of the spokes of the wheel of a moving carriage. The theory of the persistence of vision was first applied to motion pictures by film historian Terry Ramsey in 1926 (Anderson & Anderson 1993:5). The theory came to be of particular significance for viewing moving pictures in general and frame-by-frame animated cinema in particular. This theory states that "the human eye sees one image and carries with it an after-image onto the image that follows it, thus creating apparent continuity"(Wells 1998:12). Although the theory has since been debunked repeatedly by Christopher Anderson and Stuart Fischer (1978:3–11),[11] it is still widely referred to by animation theoreticians such as Furniss and Wells. The significance of the theory has more to do with how the human eye sees the illusion of movement presented by the mechanics of cinema than the exact physiological processes at play in the act of such observation. Norman McLaren's famous declaration – that what happens between each frame is much more important than what exists on each frame (McLaren in Furniss 2007: 5) – relies on the theory of the persistence of vision for its implication that there is an interruption in vision and that a gap in between frames that has to be filled with the after-image supplied by the viewer's brain. Literally speaking, there is a division between individual frames of film, but the gap to which McLaren refers is a metaphysical one. McLaren refers to how the apparatus of human perception – the combination of eye, nerve, and mind – "integrate, evaluate, and communicate the most profoundly subtle changes in time and space quickly and effortlessly" (Wells 2011:13). Pre-cinematic animation devices like the zoetrope and phenakistiscope demonstrate the basic mechanics of animation very effectively. The perception of motion is made possible by the gaps between the pictures. The interruption in the sequence of still images makes the illusion of movement possible. "The existence of the visible … is thus predicated on the absence of the visible …. Through this philosophical lens, animation,

---

[11] Anderson and Fischer demonstrated (in 1978 and again in 1993) how the theory made incorrect assumptions about the physiological processes of observation. Although the 'incorrectness' of the theory is often acknowledged by writers, the principles behind the theory prevails.

like philosophy, religion, and mythology, could be said to be the art of constructing meaning out of the unseen" (Gilbert 2018:[sp]).

McLaren's metaphysical gaps between frames, apart from its philosophical potential, represent an important underlying practical principle of animation – that of being manually 'constructed' or manipulated frame by frame, as opposed to the mechanical process of filming live footage. Before being "a medium where questions of being, non-being, mortality, immortality, illusion, and reality are envisaged" (Gilbert 2018), the gaps between frames represent the time, and opportunity for the animator to (literally) reflect on the next move. Rather than "the invisible and the darkness becom(ing) a formal material of animation" (Gilbert 2018), it is in the darkness that the animator manipulates the action from one frame to the next. This manipulation is not merely a physical action but also a philosophical one as the frame-by-frame construction of movement in the animated film is inextricably linked to constructing meaning, whereas in live-action film, movement can simply happen and is captured by the camera. In animation, every fraction of a movement – as represented in the single frame – is a considered decision taken and physically enacted by the animator. While being overwhelmingly practical as medium and as a physical activity, animation is inherently theoretical and philosophical. In defining animation as "the art of manipulating the invisible interstices between frames" McLaren did not define the practice of animation, but rather its essence (Furniss 2007:5). However, the term 'manipulation' implies action and puts the practice of animation very close to its essence.

2.2.4 On narrative strategies in animation

Wells is one of the most well-respected theorists on animation, and in his seminal book *Understanding Animation* (Wells 1998) he writes extensively on narrative strategies in animated film. Wells lists ten narrative devices, combinations of which are used in devising narrative strategies for animated film.

- *Metamorphosis*: Wells regards metamorphosis as unique to animation, as it is a device for creating movement and can be used as a structuring element. Metamorphosis is both a narrative device and a narrative strategy (see Chapter 3 for a detailed exploration).
- *Condensation*: Wells ascribes the power of short-form animation to the medium's ability "to compress a high degree of narrational information into a limited period of

time through processes of condensation"(Wells 1998:76). Condensation is essentially a device concerned with editing, as it concerns timing and constructing narrative sequences to effectively link a narrative premise to its relevant outcome. Condensation as a narrative device is significant in the animated poetry-film, since it is characteristic of both animation and poetry.

- *Synecdoche*: Synecdoche is another device closely related to the structuring of a film through editing (whether pre-emptive[12] or retrospective) by compressing "the logic of narrative progression and its dominant meanings into a single image"(Wells 1998:80). The term refers to the literary device by which a part of something is used to represent the thing as a whole. Wells describes it as an emotive and suggestive shorthand for the viewer (Wells 1998:80). Again, as with condensation, it is a device that privileges economy of medium/expression shared with poetry.
- *Symbolism and metaphor*: Symbolism and metaphor are acknowledged to be complicated and to complicate narrative due to the fact that they might not always be within the artist's conscious control: "a symbol may be unconsciously deployed, and … may be recognised as a bearer of meaning over and beyond the artist's overt intention" (Wells 1998:83). Symbol and metaphor are related in the sense that the latter grows out of symbolism to embody a 'system of ideas' (Wells 1998) that is more flexible and open for discourse with the framework of a narrative.
- *Fabrication:* Wells uses the term 'fabrication' to refer to the expression of materiality in the animated film. However, he seems to restrict it to three-dimensional animation in which a "meta-reality is created in which an alternative version of material existence" (Wells 1998:90) is played out. He specifically references the work of Jan Svankmajer and the Quay Brothers, where materials and objects are repurposed, "creating stories through rediscovered and redetermined discourses" (Wells 1998:91). Wells seems to use the term exclusively for films in which materials and environments are "provoked into life by the revelation of their conditions of existence as they have been determined by their evolution and past use" (Wells 1998:91). I find this odd, as the term is used to circumscribe an enigmatic 'category' of animation without regard for the basic definition of the word that includes the idea of the process of manufacturing something. 'Fabrication' is used within animation contexts to refer to various actions of making – from stop-motion puppet

[12] With pre-emptive editing I refer to editing as a pre-production activity where narrative decisions are made in the planning stages of a film to avoid time and resource wastage when creating material that will not be used.

fabrication to the creation of characters and sets in pre-production. Paula Callus (2015) uses 'fabrication' as a term for the process of making the animated film – the process of photographing the artwork for each individual frame. The use of the term should include the multiple processes of fabrication occurring in making an animated film, each making a contribution to the narrative. In a wider application of 'fabrication', the phenomenon of metalepsis can be included as an effect of 'fabrication' and both are as fundamental to animation as metamorphosis. Metalepsis in animation refers to the self-consciousness of animation as to its own artifice – the medium acknowledges its own fabrication. Metalepsis is discussed in more detail in 3.1.3.

- *Associative relations*: The narrative device that Wells terms 'associative relations' is not so much a device of its own as a product of the narrative strategy of editing (montage). It entails the creation of visual dialogues using juxtaposing unconnected and contrary images
- *Sound*: Wells ascribes three functions to the soundtrack of a film: It creates mood and atmosphere, it determines the pace and emphasis, and as its primary function "creates a vocabulary by which the visual codes of the film are understood" (Wells 1998:97). Wells predominantly uses references to animated cartoons, which established a sound/image relationship unique to the animated film, to motivate these three functions. An example of these functions and the subversion thereof would be the classic *Gerald McBoing-Boing* (Cannon & Hubley 1950), in which specific 'cartoon sound vocabulary' is both brandished and lampooned. The use of sound in animated film is multifaceted and will be discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, as sound is applied within the context of the praxis.
- *Acting and performance:* Acting and performance in the animated film denote a peculiar relationship between the animator and his character(s). Since character and character development is not a strong presence in the lyrical poetry-film, I will not go into further detail on this narrative device, despite the development of character being of vital importance to films with a conventional linear narrative. Rather, I present character and performativity through using sound and voice, which will be discussed in 5.2.2 and 6.3.2.4 in relation to Movement 1:Piaf of my film *Parys suite* (Grobler 2018).
- *Choreography*: Choreography in animation concerns the "dynamics of movement itself as a narrative principle" (Wells 1998:111). Wells regards the concept of choreography in animated film as a direct extension of the theatrical term 'staging', which concerns the designing, modifying, and adapting of the performance space for

the sake of the flow of the narrative. In the case of animated film, the performance space is not static, and the concept of staging/choreography would extend to the dynamics of movement of all elements on screen. Wells refers to the modern dance theories of Rudolf Laban (Wells 1998:112-115) in terms of the dynamics of movement. In the animated film, narrative is often played out through the movement of bodies, both figurative and abstract. Laban identifies 16 basic movement themes, the first eight of which in a sense echoes the 12 principles of animation, using concepts like 'flow of weight', the body's resistance to weight and time, and awareness of the body. Wells' discussion of these principles mainly pertains to the animated character's adherence to the principles of physical reality in hyper-realistic animation. Wells regards Laban's movement thematics as a useful system for analysing an animated sequence as a piece of choreographic narrative. Laban's themes were formulated within the context of modern dance and therefore are intrinsically linked to the body and its expression through movement. Some of Laban's set of movement themes focus on rhythm and function of movement and are more useful within the context of this study. Wells refers to the 'specific vocabulary' of a movement, which can be taken to function on a semantic level. Working with non-linear narrative in the lyrical poetry-film, movement will be divorced from characterisation and therefore from narration through characterisation. Movement will function rather as a meaningful attribute of objects.

- *Penetration:* Penetration as narrative device might be one of the most important devices in lyrical poetry-film. Wells quotes John Halas and Joy Batchelor on the power of penetration in the animated film: "The internal workings of an organism can easily be shown in this medium. The depths of a man's soul is more than a phrase to the animator: it can also be a picture" (Halas & Batchelor in Wells 1998). By means of the device of penetration, the animator can penetrate through external appearances and show directly what a character feels or thinks, revealing things beyond the viewer's comprehension. Penetration can show things directly that might otherwise be hinted at through symbolism and metaphor. Wells' description of penetration as a revelatory device is significant, as the revelation is a manner of showing how things are, and not how things happened, making penetration a narrative device well -suited for the portrayal of non-linear narratives. It might be the ideal narrative device for the telling of a poetry-film, as the poet's and filmmaker's ideas can be made visual directly if they so choose. However, the term does suggest an invasion, an intrusion lacking in subtlety that might be at odds with the nature of poetry.

While these narrative devices are not unique to animation, some, like metamorphoses can be regarded as fundamental to the medium. Narrative devices that are pertinently shared with poetry are condensation, synecdoche, symbolism and metaphor, associative relations, and penetration, and therefore are valuable in an examination on the suitability of animation for the creation of poetry-film. A narrative device fundamental to both animation and poetry, and which I would add to the list, is metalepsis which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

2.3 Poetry-film

Poetry-film is a hybrid art form combining poetry with cinema. It is not a tidy hybrid with a succinct definition. On the contrary, practitioners of its diverse incarnations cannot agree on a single term. The combination of poetry and film has infinite variations depending on a practitioner's focus or angle of approach. While trying to define itself to the satisfaction of all its practitioners and theorists, poetry-film is trying to find an inclusive term to encompass all audio-visual expressions that include poetry. In his address to the colloquium at the ZEBRA Poetry Film Festival 2012, Tom Konyves (2012:[sp]) gives a thorough explanation of all the possible options – videopoem, filmpoetry, poetry-film, film-poem, among others – all indicative of a slightly different accent in the artwork. He expresses his preference for the term 'videopoetry'. To Konyves, it is important that the term be one word – not hyphenated – to indicate that a fusion of the visual and the verbal has occurred and a new form has come into being. Furthermore, he insists that the second part of the compound noun be 'poetry', as the second term indicates the genre, while the first indicates the material base. For Konyves, the important part is poetry or the poetic experience.

Harvor (2017:[sp]) is in favour of multiple terms: "recognising there are several discrete genres of videopoetry allows critical/curatorial systems to accommodate videopoems that are either 'more' visual or 'more' verbal/textual, and allow them to co-exist rather vie in uneasy competition". His concern is with the parameters of 'authorship' and "the question of what it means to create a literary artefact … because collaborations between filmmakers and writers often lead to an overwhelming amount of credit being lent to the filmmaker, it may be that we need even more specific forms than the rather loosely defined category of videopoetry" (Harvor 2017:[sp]). He motivates this concern by referring to the near-invisibility of the screenwriter in feature-film making and states

that the 'seduction of the visual' can be at the expense of the verbal, watering down the poetic qualities of poem and film hybrid art forms.

> Therefore, it may be that we need forms that are hybridised insofar as they employ many media but are the work, above all, of the poet; that is, a movie in which the author of the poem is also, directly and clearly, the author of the 'new media' creation. In this way, poetry can retain its position of importance (Harvor 2017:[sp]).

I disagree with Harvor on several points with regard to the question of authorship in the poetry/film hybrid, and therefore have to agree to the need for multiple terms. His reference to the near invisibility of the screen writer in feature films cannot be equated with the poet/filmmaker relationship in poetry-film. The feature film is seldom intended to be a literature-film hybrid. Even when the film is based on a literary work, the novel is seldom (if ever) present in its original literary form as is the case in poetry-film. The narrative of the novel is adapted for the screen – the material base of the narrative is altered, the words in which it was written are mostly absent[13] and the literary style in which the novel was created can at best be simulated in the feature film. In an argument against the perceived superiority of the literary work within the context of filmic adaptations, McFarlane (2007:16, 17) maintains that "there are two utterly different semiotic systems at issue here, and I want to claim that there is at least as much at stake in the informed response to the codes at work in film … as there is in the acts of visualisation and comprehension enjoined on the reader" (McFarlane 2007:16, 17).

Similar to Harvor's view on the prominence of the writer, Cook (2017:[sp]) believes poetry-film should combine the literary work – both the words and concepts – with visual and audio layering. In this visual-audio symbiosis, the visual aspect of the artwork should provide a sub-text that embellishes the poem, allowing "the poet's voice to be seen, as well as heard. The collaboration remains with the words"(Cook 2010:[sp]). In my view, to insist on the predominance of the poet and the words tends to render the concepts of 'collaboration' and 'symbiosis' obsolete. In claiming authorship of the new media creation for the poet – for poetry to retain its position of importance - Harvor disregards the contribution the filmmaker makes to the hybrid in terms of reconceptualising and recontextualising the written words in visual terms. Creating a

---

[13] Although direct speech might prevail and be used in the film as dialogue.

film also involves a great deal of technical expertise of which the poet is not necessarily a master. The idea that poetry must retain its position of primary importance within a hybrid art form negates the idea of hybridisation. The need of the artist to cross the boundaries between media comes at a cost. The text and visual images are two different systems of signification that have to find a balance within the hybrid. In the poetry-film, the boundaries between literature and film are crossed from both sides in that poets venture into the visual medium as much as filmmakers involve themselves with poetry. The ekphrastic impulse is felt by both.

The role of the ekphrastic impulse in the conception and creation of poetry-films must be examined briefly to get a better understanding of this need to cross the boundaries between visual and literary media.

2.3.1 Poetry-film and ekphrasis

Ekphrastic poetry has been a common phenomenon throughout the history of poetry since Homer's description of the shield of Achilles. Ekphrasis basically means 'description' in Greek, and an ekphrastic poem attempts a vivid description of a work of art. Ekphrasis belongs to a category of media representation in which the re-representation of a source medium in a target medium occurs "with a certain degree of elaboration (energeia), including a repurposing of the source – for instance through a semiotic process – and eliciting enargeia [a vivid image in the mind] of the receiver" (Killander et al. 2014:10).

David Kinloch (2010:20) describes ekphrasis as "the verbal representation of visual representation", and as such in a sense twice removed from the real world. "A poem about a painting is already a critical act, more so than a poem about anything in the 'real' world because it is responding to a pre-existing response" (Kinloch 2010:20). Similarly, a film about a poem responds to the dialogue the poet is having with the 'real world', turning the dialogue into a conversation.

The poetry-film could be said to suffer from the ekphrastic impulse in reverse – the artist, inspired by the words, is moved to visually respond to it. However, in this case, the two media concerned share a common trait that is absent from the usual ekphrastic situation – temporality. Unlike the pairing of painting with poetry, both poem and film are temporal. Hannah Andrews (2013:376) regards reverse ekphrasis as an act of

interpretation that aims to bring a poem to life as a moving image. The narrative and thematic contents of the poem are translated into visual tropes. The danger always exists that such a visual representation might result in too literal a translation – that the verbal description in the poem might be visually reproduced in a direct manner through the film camera.

The ekphrastic impulse is reliant on the possibility of a pseudomorph coming into being "when a composer concentrates on a poem or daydreams about it, a pseudomorph comes into being, a tentative pattern of durations and emphases, a phantom of rhythm" (Albright 2014:235). Albright views the creation of a pseudomorph as a common and necessary step in the creation of an artwork. Cross-disciplinary inspiration is a very common occurrence in the arts. Albright (2014: 241) attempts to provide insight into the process by describing how themes and words in poetry may "rouse memories of tunes and harmonies and structural patterns memories that imagination may find useful in refining and specifying the pseudomorph, as it arrests its vagrancies, starts to assume a determinate form". Albright (2014: 241) cautions that ekphrasis is a provisional exercise and of necessity reaches its limit at some point in the interpretive process. It is essential that the artwork should refuse further ekphrasis at some point, for the good of both the source and the target medium. Forced ekphrasis would result in a demystifying of the source medium, and an overbearingly descriptive or illustrative result in the target medium. The boundaries between mediums have to be acknowledged and respected in the ekphrastic pair of source and target, or the one might 'demolish' the other: If the poem about the painting forces the ekphrastic impulse, the painting might lose its power of expression. In the case of the poetry-film, the over-ekphrastic film might rob the poem of its value as a literary work.

WJT Mitchell (2005) points to a crucial rule of ekphrasis that disqualifies the poetry-film from being truly ekphrastic. In an ekphrastic pairing, the visual, graphic, plastic object, or "the 'other' medium is never made visible or tangible except by way of the medium of language " (Mitchell 2005:263). In a sense, the ekphrastic poem is self-consciously intermedial as it intentionally attempts to activate the sense of sight through its artifice of language. The poetry-film, though its creation may have been sparked by an ekphrastic impulse, therefore cannot be regarded as a true instance of ekphrasis, as both the source and the target mediums are present in the created artefact. More often

than not, the poem is present as an auditory track or as a visual element of text on screen. However, the cinematic aspect of the poetry-film should not aim to represent the poem to the same extent to which an ekphrastic poem attempts to represent a visual artwork. Language can conjure up visual imagery in the imagination of a reader through apt description. Due to the semiotic differences between the two systems of signification, visual imagery does not have the power to mimic language in the same way. The ekphrastic impulse is merely the starting point in the conception of the poetry-film.

2.3.2 The animated poetry-film

Michael Riffaterre (1980) differentiates between poetry and non-poetry based on the way poetic text carries meaning. Poetry expresses concepts and things by indirection. Riffaterre (1980:2) refers to non-poetic language in terms of mimesis, which is founded upon the referentiality of language: "The text multiplies details and continually shift its focus to achieve an acceptable likeness to reality since reality is normally complex. Mimesis is variation and multiplicity". Mimesis can be equated with live-action cinema and is solidly grounded in physical reality. On the other hand, animation corresponds to the 'poetic experience', that of expressing concepts and things by indirection.[14] Gordeeff (2018) refers to live action as 'motivated representation' – "a natural representivity captured by the camera and understood objectively by the spectator" (Gordeeff 2018:56). In animation, an 'arbitrary' representation is at play in an intended representivity resulting from a sequence of drawings or filmed objects made to move. In the animated film, everything represented is intended in the sense that every visual element on screen was placed there consciously, and to the same extent, every word in a poem is carefully considered and arranged. Depending on the medium and the technique involved, every element on screen was created and manipulated to move over time, intentionally. In contrast to the variation and multiplicity of mimesis, the characteristic feature of the poem is its formal and semantic unity. Riffaterre (1980:2)

---

[14] As can be deduced from Well's categorisation of narrative strategies in animation (Wells 1998:86–126) and other writers (Furniss, Dill, Robertson among others) who have commented on corresponding qualities of poetry and animation.

calls this formal and semantic unity the ‘significance’ of the text, reserving the term ‘meaning’ for the information conveyed by the text at the mimetic level.

Live cinema maintains its claim to realism “by asserting direct connection between its moving photographic images and the real world” (Hebert 2005:183) and has to hide the cinematic apparatus to substantiate such a claim. Because animation has never made a claim to literal realism, it does not conceal the technical apparatus on which it is based. The animation filmmaker can and should become visible in the animated poetry-film, to the same extent at least to which the poet is present in the poetry-film through the words and style of writing. What Riffaterre terms the ‘indices of indirection’ in poetic language, I equate with visual style and the extent to which an artist’s graphic style diverts from mimesis or realism.

> [T]he poem … results from the transformation of a word or sentence into a text, or the transformation of texts into a larger whole, then its form is felt to be a detour or circuitous path around what it means … the form or shape of the detour is interpreted as an artefact, with visible joints and props. Hence, a constant component of poetic significance is that the poem's language looks as much like a ritual or a game … , or pure artifice, as it does like a means of conveying sense (Riffaterre 1980:164).

Similarly, the animated film results from the transformation of a concept based on experience in reality into hand-made visual imagery. The “circuitous path around what it means” is how Riffaterre (1980:164) refers with regard to poetry. The circuitous path would refer to the viewer’s experience and understanding of the artwork in the animated film and implies the translation of the imagery back into experienced reality.

In Hannes Rall’s (2020) book on literary adaptation for animated film, he recognises the challenges of adapting poetry. Linear storylines and concrete plotlines found in prose are replaced by metaphorical description and increasing abstraction in poetry. He aims to determine how animated adaptation can face the challenge of source material in which narrative linearity is arbitrary and poses a few poignant questions regarding the adaptability of poetry into animated film. In the first question, Rall asks if it is “possible to enhance narrative linearity while still preserving the artistic intent of the author of the original piece?” (Rall 2020:284).

Rall addresses three pertinent aspects of the animated poetry-film with the question. Rall’s first line of enquiry revolves around the aspect of honouring the intent of the poet, and secondly the aspect of the narrative structure of the film. In the question, the poetic

intent and the idea of narrative linearity are pitched as opposites. Although the nature of the hypothetical poem is unknown, an unconventional narrative structure is assumed, and a conventional narrative solution is proposed. The integrity of the poem is almost presented as an obstacle to overcome for the sake of a linear narrative. Rall's expression of a requirement for a conventional linear narrative reflects the impulse towards hyperrealism of orthodox animation's origin in the Disney tradition and its 12 principles of animation. Narrative linearity is not essential in any animated film. On the contrary, many animated films with no link to poetry consciously explore non-linear narrative structures, often taking the formal elements of animation as subject matter. The work of countless animators attests to this, for example, *La Funambola* (2002) by Roberto Catani, *Fugue* (1998) by George Schwichgebel, *25, Passage des oiseaux* (2016) by Florence Miailhe, and most of Sasha Svirsky's films (Svirsky 2015).

Rall's second line of enquiry acknowledges the less-sequential structure of narrative in poetry, asking if the adaptation should create an animated equivalent (Rall 2020:284). Again, there is a focus on the importance of sequentiality in conventional approaches to adaptation, and the embracing of a less-sequential structure seems to imply an unexpected adaption.

Rall's third line of enquiry posits the possibility that animation is "particularly well suited for adapting fragmented, non-linear narratives by employing its unique means of filmic expression" (Rall 2020:284).[15] Animation's "unique means of filmic expression" is at the heart of the distinction between linear narrative animation and animated poetry-film.[16] This unique means of filmic expression is also at the heart of my argument for animation as the ideal medium for poetry-film that will be explicated during the course of this study.

2.3.3 The animator as auteur

The role of the filmmaker in the poetry-film is a hotly contested issue among practitioners of the medium when filmmakers work with pre-existing poetry. Friction

---

15 I am slightly perplexed by Rall's reference to the poetry text as 'fragmented' due to its non-linear narrative structure. The term suggests a disorganised or disunified text, which would be the antithesis of the very concept of a poem.

16 Similarly, filmic expression is at the heart of the distinction between general poetry-film (with real-time footage) and animated poetry-film.

develops between the idea of the filmmaker as auteur of the film and the poet as auteur of the text used in the film – the text which inspired and informed the content of the film. Posts on blogs and dedicated social media pages often pose the following question: Why is it uncritically assumed that poetry-film is only a sub-genre of film, rather than a genre of poetry? The resulting debates exemplify the division among poetry-filmmakers on the issue and how ingrained the compartmentalisation of the arts is.[17]

Artists and academics involved in the study of poetry-film, Fil Ieropolous and Fin Harvor,[18] express directly opposing views. On the one hand, Ieropolous favours the filmmaker as auteur: "The poetry-film tradition has arrived at the point where the notion of the filmmaker as the main person behind a filmic creation has to be reclaimed and the modernist appropriation of poetics on film are seen as an 'alternative viewpoint'"(Ieropoulos [Sa]). On the other hand, Harvor maintains that poetry-film[19] should be regarded as a genre of literature: "What videopoetry requires as a form is a clearly thought-out literary/aesthetic ideology. But to have this, it also needs to prove that it is a fundamentally literary form …. On a practical level, one needs to foreground the poem – ideally, the text – in a videopoem" (Harvor 2017).

Francois Truffaut as a proponent of auteurism, decried the 'tradition of quality' which "reduced film making to the mere translation of a pre-existing screenplay, when it should be seen as an open-ended adventure in creative mise-en-scene" (Stam 2000:[sp]). The literary origin of the poetry-film is a point of departure. Even though the text may be present in the film, the poem was never written to be a screenplay, and the film constructed around it constitutes a new narrative, albeit informed by and including the poem.

The authorial film calls for the 'death of the scriptwriter' as "in this kind of filmmaking the distinction between author and director loses all meaning. Direction is no longer a means of illustrating or presenting a scene and is instead a true act of writing. The filmmaker/author writes with a camera as a writer writes with a pen" (Astruc in Corrigan

---

17 Due to the temporality of social media, these debates soon disappear from the internet. Pages and blogs involved are typically http://poetryfilmlive.com/, http://movingpoems.com/, https://poetryfilm.org/, http://liberatedwords.com/

18 Harvor prefers the term 'videopoetry'.

19 Harvor prefers the term 'videopoem'.

2012:182). In 'The birth of a new avant garde: La camera-stylo' (1948), Alexandre Astruc writes about cinema becoming a means of expression, in the same way as painting and writing. He ascribes this statement to cinema becoming a language "breaking free from the tyranny of what is visual, from the image for its own sake … to become a means of writing just as flexible and subtle as written language" (Astruc in Corrigan 2012:182). Corrigan regards the analogy as fragile due to the creative collaboration required and economic implications of expressing an individual's idea on film. However, apart from the gradual development of a film language, Astruc also credits technological advancement and ease of distribution for this dawning of this new age of the camera-stylo. With 'technological advancement' Astruc refers to the development of the 16 mm film camera almost one hundred years ago. The technological leap over the past two decades has put high-quality digital image-making, processing, and distribution within everybody's reach, and has placed the control of every aspect of the filmmaking process within the auteur filmmaker's reach, gradually removing both the need for collaboration and the economic implications of making a film.

In *The Death of the Author* (1967) Roland Barthes questions the identity of the narrating entity in any work of literature: "literature is that neuter, that composite, that oblique into which every subject escapes, the trap where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes" (Barthes 1967). Andrew Gallix (2010:[sp]) explains that for Barthes language itself speaks in a narrative, not the author and works of fiction are palimpsests without a single fixed meaning. "A text consists of multiple writings, issuing from several cultures and entering into dialogue with each other … but there is one place where this multiplicity is collected, united, and this place is not the author, … but the reader"(Barthes 1967:[sp]). Barthes claims that the author must be killed off for the reader to be born to restore literature. However, Barthes does not allow the reader a personality either: "The reader is a man without history, without biography, without psychology; he is only that someone who holds gathered into a single field all the paths of which the text is constituted"(Barthes 1967:[sp]). Camila Lindval and Matthew Melton (1994) disagree with Barthes about his notion of the death of the author,[20] positioning

[20] 'Death of the author' is a concept of literary criticism that disregards the writer's intentions and biographical facts in the reading of a text.

the independent, auteur-driven animated film[21] as a discourse. A discourse requires communicating subjects, one of whom is the filmmaker or auteur. "The consciousness of the reader [the reader's birth] occurs in encountering the author(s) in the words and images of the created text. The reader is neither a passive consumer of unyielding ideologies nor an independent constructor of brave new worlds, but one who seeks a meeting of minds in the text" (Lindvall & Melton 1994:156, 157). Lindval and Melton regard auteur-animation, like avant-garde film, as a genre where the specific viewpoint of the author is essential for the conversation. Their viewpoint is especially relevant in poetry-film that uses pre-existing texts as point of departure, thus inherently implying that conversation between poet and filmmaker is already under way[22]. When the poetry-film is animated, a further involvement of the filmmaker as author manifests itself in the visual style used by the animator and the physical frame-by-frame 'authoring' of the film.[23]

Pikkov (2018:34) regards the director's authorial position as inseparable from the film and views the extent to which the film affects the director personally as the most important criterion in the evaluation of an animated film. In the process of making a poetry-film, the filmmaker is affected personally by the poem selected to such a degree that he is prepared to spend a substantial amount of time transposing that affection into a film. The poem is the source of inspiration for the poetry-film in the same way in which a folk tale, true occurrence, or any other narrative could inspire a filmmaker. The factor complicating the question of authorship of the poetry-film from certain points of view is that the very language used to create the poem remains physically present in the poetry-film. However, the auteur filmmaker constructs a screenplay that is informed by the literary text to form the story detail that will be conveyed visually. In the animated

---

21 Camila Lindval and Matthew Melton (1994) use the term 'cartoon' with which I am uncomfortable as it conjures up images of the commercial, comical entertainment product that is the antithesis of the kind of animated film I am discussing in this study. Steve Greenberg (2011:5) is of similar opinion, referring to 'cartoon' as a genre of animation.

22 An argument could be made that there is no conversation as such between the poet and the filmmaker but rather between the poem/text and the filmmaker. Like Lindval and Melton I disagree with Barthes on the death of the author, especially if the author is a poet; lyrical poetry often expresses an intensely personal point of view, not to be divorced from the poet. Also, of course, the filmmaker and the poet might be literally in conversation, as was the case with me and Carina van der Walt on *Parys Suite*.

23 See also the section on Metalepsis (Chapter 4) and how the animation artist reveals his presence through, among other things, visual style.

poetry-film the animator also authors the visual language (style) in which such a narrative will be related. A further process of authoring occurs when the animator painstakingly constructs the film frame by frame.

Due to the unique nature of the narrative within lyrical poetry, the poem as text must remain within the poetry-film. The ungrammaticalities in language that distinguish poetry from prose make the poem as text indispensable in the poetry-film because it structures the visual narrative.

I will look at some theories on the nature of narration to explain this interdependence between visual and literary narration, and specifically how the visual-literary interdependence operates within poetry to determine the simultaneity (or juxtaposition) of visual and literary narrative in the poetry-film.

2.4 Narrative

Narratology In its infinite variety of forms, is a basic human characteristic, present since pre-history in all societies, and wholly unconcerned with good or bad literature. “Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural” (Barthes 1975:237). Peter Hühn and Roy Sommer (2013) define narration as “a communicative act in which a chain of happenings is meaningfully structured and transmitted in a particular medium and from a particular point of view” (Huhn & Sommer 2013:[sp]). Language is the semiotic code best suited to storytelling because of its ability to make propositions. Every narrative can be summarised in language, a narrative agility that pictures do not have. However, media based on sensory channels can make unique contributions to the formation of narrative meaning by setting mood (music) or describing spatial setting (pictures). These are aspects of narrative that are increasingly important to the narrative experience as society and technology advances towards a more visually oriented narrative.

In an article on the functioning of frame narrative in animated films, Mary Slowik (2014) references James Phelan to distinguish between two basic kinds of stories – “stories that tell what happened and stories that tell what is” (Slowik 2014:281). Stories that tell what happened are event-driven, describing the adventures of characters through sequences of activity or action. Stories that ‘tell what is’ refer to lyrical narratives that intend to reveal the underlying condition of a narrative. Stories that ‘tell what is’ move “toward

fuller revelation of the speaker's situation and perspective, and [lead the audience] … toward deeper understanding of and participation in what is revealed" (Phelan 2004:635).

Avant-garde filmmaker Maya Deren distinguishes between various kinds of narrative in terms of a horizontal and a vertical axis. The 'horizontal attack' of drama or conventional narrative is driven by action: "In Shakespeare, you have the drama moving forward on a 'horizontal' plane of development, of one circumstance and one action-leading to another, and this delineates the character" (Deren in Sitney 2000:183). The 'vertical attack' of lyrical poetry happens periodically when "he arrives at a point of action where he wants to illuminate the meaning to this moment of drama, and, at that moment, he builds a pyramid or investigates it 'vertically'" (Deren in Sitney 2000:183).

2.4.1 Narrative in poetry-film

In poetry-film, narrative functions in a similar manner to narratives in lyrical poetry. Lyrical poetry is Phelan's 'stories that tell what is' and can be investigated along Deren's vertical axis. Lyrical poetry can be briefly defined as "writing that formulates a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience in language chosen and arranged to create a specific emotional response through meaning, sound, and rhythm"(MW [Sa] Sv 'poetry'). Hühn and Sommer (2013:[sp]) state that like prose, poetry relates stories in the sense that poetry represents temporally organised sequences. Lyric poetry in a strict sense "typically features strings of primarily mental or psychological happenings perceived through the consciousness of single speakers and articulated from their position" (Huhn & Sommer 2013:[sp]). As with prose narratives, poetry can also embody the two underlying components of the narrative process, namely temporal sequentiality and mediation.

Relying on Ryan's (2003:1–23) analyses of the theoretical foundations of transmedial narratology, I will attempt to circumscribe the functioning of narrative in poetry-film. Following Ryan's classification of medium, poetry-film can be described as a dynamic spatiotemporal medium with varying priorities regarding sensory channels, for example, some films might give the sound channel more priority than the visual. Mediality is a relational property and not an absolute one.

Ryan (2003:11, 12) categorises narrative modes in binary pairs to attempt to expand narratology into a medium-free theory. She proposes these modes as binary opposites. However, in a multimodal medium like poetry-film, binary opposites co-exist and function parallel to each other.

- Diegetic/Mimetic: According to Ryan, a diegetic narration is the "verbal storytelling act of a narrator". This mode presupposes oral or written language, and in the poetry-film would refer to the poetry text, which can be present either as voiceover, or text on screen. In Ryan's classification, "mimetic narration is an act of showing, a 'spectacle' … exemplified by all dramatic arts: movies, theatre, dance, and the opera" (Ryan 2003:11, 12). Ryan does discuss the possibility of intrusion of one of these modes upon a narration dominated by the other, as when voiceover narrations introduce a diegetic element in a mimetic medium. However, in poetry-film the medium is not a purely mimetic medium and by definition intermedial. Therefore, the diegetic and mimetic modes are expected to co-exist.
- Receptive/Participatory: In the receptive mode the recipient of the narrative is passive, receiving an account of the narrative action without playing an active role. By contrast, in the participatory mode the recipient becomes an active agent within the narration as character and contributes to the production of the plot, as is the case with computer games, role-playing games, or improv theatre. In poetry-film, due to the structure of narrative in poetry (with corresponding traits in the visual aspects of the film), the participatory aspect in the poetry-film entails constructing meaning. The recipient does not merely receive the narrative, but must play an active role in constructing meaning from semiotic clues. Poetry-films does not present stories that are easy to follow.
- Determinate/Indeterminate: The determinate mode presents a reasonably definite script, whereas in the indeterminate mode only a couple of points are specified on a narrative trajectory, which allows the viewer/interpreter to imagine possible outcomes within these co-ordinates. Ryan typically ascribes the indeterminate mode to narrative paintings that tell original stories. As static visual images, such paintings depend upon the pregnant moment[24] that "opens a small temporal window that lets the spectator imagine what immediately preceded and what will immediately follow

[24] If art is confined to a single moment in representing an action, it must choose "the most fruitful … the most pregnant … that which allows free play to the imagination"(Lessing in Sime 1890).

the represented scene" (Ryan 2003:12, 13). Ryan concedes that a full-blown story may cover an extended stretch of time and that the imagined remote past and remote future may vary from spectator to spectator. The imagined past and future ties the indeterminate mode to the participatory mode above. The recipient in the poetry-film often deals with an open-ended narrative that depends on metaphorical references and semantic associations. While determinate in the sense of its temporal nature, the poetry-film is often indeterminate in the direction the narrative is exactly going between the beginning and the end.

- Literal/Metaphorical: In this pair, literal narration refers to the conventional understanding of the term, while metaphorical narration refers to situations in which only some features of the definition of narrative are retained. Ryan uses examples of art forms derived from semantic content, as in music and architecture where the structure of a work can be analysed in terms of narrative effects or functions. In poetry-film, both modes can be present as the degree of narrativity varies in individual poems.

These aspects of mediality can be regarded as characteristic of the poetry-film due to the presence of duel semiotic systems, namely language and visual signs, that function in tandem. Because medium and genre exercise constraints on the kind of stories that can be told, the artist must overcome the limitations of a medium or make them irrelevant by combining media and creating new genres. The genre of poetry-film aims to combine the media of poetry and film to expand the narrative and expressive possibilities of both.

2.4.2 Animation as a semiotic system

The concept of a 'language of animation' is often brandished – with substantiation – by writers on animation. Considering the stated breadth and variation of forms of animation as a medium, it might be more accurate to refer to the 'languages of animation' as the uniqueness of the visual sign systems would vary from film to film, and would be influenced by their position on Furniss' continuum of motion picture image types. The closer a film is situated towards 'mimesis', the less it will have to establish its visual imagery as a separate language system to be read or deciphered. In an abstract film, as in any abstract visual artwork, the viewer has to become accustomed to a system of signification that is far removed from lived experience, while the mimetic

nature of imagery in orthodox animation makes it immediately recognisable and understood.

Visual images possess both an expression and content plane for meaning making that should be factored in for the plane's contribution to meaning making in text. This inclusion of the expression and content plane should especially occur in a medium where text and visual imagery functions together within a shared timeline, as is the case in poetry-film. Both text and imagery impart meaning on 'equal footing', with text neither functioning in a supportive role as dialogue, nor imagery functioning merely as illustration. However, Victor Fei (2007:[sp]) cautions that one should not draw unnecessary comparisons between the semiotic functioning of visual imagery and that of language, but rather investigate the general principles by which a semiotic system operates, and from that understanding deduce how other semiotic systems like images, film, or animation operate. For film semiotics pioneer Christian Metz, cinematic sense-making and linguistic sense-making possess similar features, adjusted to fit each medium's primary mode of address (Yacavone 2018). Daniel Yacavone refers to Metz's approach as a 'structural narratology', both drawing on a key narrative concept such as diegesis, and structuralist concepts such as the paradigmatic and syntagmatic organisation of signs that constitute a semiotic system (Yacavone 2018). Paradigms are sets of functionally equivalent signifying elements, which in film or animation would refer to image (shot), shot scale (long shots, medium shots or close-ups), types of lighting, camera movements, editing transitions, among others. Syntagma refers to the self-contained autonomous segments of a film resulting from the combination and ordering of paradigms, differentiated on the formal structural relations of time, space, and action, irrespective of narrative content (Yacavone 2018). If syntagms are to be considered as 'words' in a film language, they have little meaning by themselves until placed within a context with other 'film-words'.

Albright (2014:116) regards montage as an essential device in the development of a language of film and discusses Eisenstein's comparison of the elements of a montage to lexemes, not words, "[Eisenstein] noted that the pairing of one film bit with a contrasting bit is like the pairing of two primitive 'hieroglyphs' that might combine to make a Chinese ideogram—a word in a language of visual design but pronounceable in spoken language" (Albright 2014:116). Eisenstein was referring to Japanese culture, both

visual (with regard to ideograms) and literary (with regard to the concision in the poetry-form of *hai-kai,* also referred to as *haiku* or *hokku*). With regard to the link between Japanese writing and montage, Eisenstein explains how "the … combination of two hieroglyphs of the simplest series is regarded not as their sum total but as their product … : each taken separately corresponds to an object but their combination corresponds to a concept" (Eisenstein 1988:139). By combining two objects that are graphically representable, the representation of an abstract concept that is not directly depictable becomes possible. For Eisenstein montage functions according to the same principle. Representational shots that are neutral[25] in terms of their meaning are juxtaposed in meaningful contexts and series. He viewed montage as an essential device for the creation of an intellectual cinema, a collision between two independent images or shots that gives rise to a new idea or concept.

Jason Lindop (2007:[sp]) is critical of Eisenstein for not subjecting the kinds of meaning produced, or how meaning is produced, through this 'ideogrammatical' approach and thus to a sufficiently rigorous analysis. He identifies "an awareness of the possibility for ambiguous meanings and a search for ways to reduce or eliminate potential ambiguity" in Eisenstein's writing.[26] Eisenstein recognises the possibility of various outcomes to the collision of concepts:

> In my view a series is merely one possible particular case. Remember that physics is aware of an infinite number of combinations arising from the impact (collision) between spheres. Depending on whether they are elastic, non-elastic or a mixture of the two. Among these combinations is one where the collision is reduced to a uniform movement of both in the same direction (Eisenstein 1988:144).

Of course, the possible ambiguity of an image is out of the director's control and dependent on the viewer's specific personal relationship with images – something that is not possible to control. Culture in the twenty-first century is visually oriented. Due to the state of communication technology, the viewers are well-informed and make neutral

---

25 To the extent that any image can claim neutrality.

26 It is important to look at Eisenstein's writing within the context of the time and circumstances in which he wrote. He was a filmmaker in the pioneering years of cinema, a Bolshevik, and later (despite the socialist themes of his films) his concern with the structural issues of his craft drew criticism from the Soviet film community.

images rather hard to come by. Eisenstein was writing (and making films) for a less informed and more homogenous audience.

Bendazzi (2008:6) attributes much of animation's characteristics as a semiotic system to the technicalities of its production. In early cinema projection, the crank on the movie projector was turned by hand, and thus projection speeds would vary, depending on the skill of the projectionist. When projection speed became standard, it made the creation of effects possible in the filming phase, such as stop motion (taking of photograms one by one rather than using continuous filming), and changing the position of filmed objects during the pauses between frames (so that during projection, lifeless objects seemed to come to life).

> This 'effect' allowed for the development of a language. Through the single photogram technique, it was possible to invent types of movement that don't exist naturally, and in that way conquer the fourth dimension (time) after the two dimensions of painting and the three of sculpture. This is what we mean intimately by animation: not so much the attribution of motion but the attribution of a soul (or a personality) to objects, forms or shapes (even abstract) that are otherwise lifeless (Bendazzi 2008:6).

Bendazzi (2008:6) distinguishes between the language of animation and that of live-action film in terms of the psychological component of believability. In live-action cinema, the realness of the actors and settings is fundamental to the viewer's acceptance of the illusion. Emotional identification is presumed to be more difficult in animation because the viewer is presented with things that are not real and represent reality, such as drawn or painted imagery or models. Narration is more difficult in animation than in live-action film "because the concept is based on stylised film content that the spectator must accept and interiorise" (Bendazzi 2008:7). This opinion is debatable in light of the ever-increasing presence of animation in all forms of technology and communication. The twenty-first-century viewer has become accustomed to the language(s) of animation because graphic icons, and still and animated gifs have become part of daily communication. Users have become accustomed to the concept of consuming graphic imagery. Animation has also increasingly moved towards realism, resulting in the seamless joining of animated and real-time footage in a large percentage of commercial cinematic productions, almost justifying Alan Cholodenko's (2005:5) assertion that "[n]ot only is animation a form of cinema, cinema – all cinema – is a form of animation".

Andrew Burn and David Parker (2001:6) identify two main categories of grammar in formulating a 'grammar of the moving image' – the one concerned with constructing the text, and the other with the reception of the text:

> The first is a descriptive model of the spatiotemporal grammatical system of the moving image: how space is designed, for instance, in a single frame of an animated film; and how time is designed, by creating representations of movement, structures of duration, and so on.
>
> The second category, which we have called spectatorial grammar, aims to describe how the spectator's response to, understanding of, engagement with the film is grammatically constructed, as a counterpart to the grammar of the text, sometimes assenting to the implied positions it offers, sometimes dissenting. (Burn & Parker 2001:6)

Burn and Parker coin the term *kineikonic* to refer to the visual language system that consists of a lexicon and a grammar: a "lexicon of images and its grammatical systems of combination in space and time"(Burn & Parker 2001:62). They propose three categories of inscription in making an animated film:

- Inscriptions of the synchronic – the process of setting up individual still images that when combined as a filmic sequence, create the moving image. They also use the term 'synchronic syntagm' to refer to "how each frame of the film has its own visual grammar. It is made up of interrelated signs … like a visual 'sentence'; but again, apparently outside time. This [visual sentence] produces meanings distinct from, though related to, the diachronic syntagm" (Burn & Parker 2001:164)
- Inscriptions of the diachronic – the process of adding the temporal aspects to effect the illusion of movement, combining individual images to form a filmic sequence, thereby create duration, speed, and aspects of timing and movement.
- Inscriptions of display – the presentation of the completed text for consumption on various surfaces from projection screen to mobile phone monitor.

The identification of the process of display and consumption of the cinematic text is significant as the identification acknowledges the contribution of the viewer in constructing the visual language and the role of the act of perception in constructing meaning.

2.4.3 Viewing as a process of constructing meaning

Any artwork is an act of communication between artist and audience, be it author/poet and reader or filmmaker and viewer. Animation is a medium that straddles the divide between art form and popular entertainment Wells (1998:35) termed the two poles of

the medium 'orthodox' (to refer to animation as entertainment), and 'abstract' (to refer to animation as art). The degree to which the communication between filmmaker and viewer is indeterminate and participatory positions the artwork on the spectrum between these two poles, a broad category to which Wells refers as 'developmental animation'. Animated poetry-film requires the viewer to engage with the visual material to the same extent that the reader of poetry is involved in constructing the meaning of the text. The opportunity[27] always exists for the viewer to read (or project) their own concerns into the understanding of an artwork. No single reading of a poem or film can provide an absolute truth, and every reading adds meaning. Peter Wollen (2012:196) argues that meaning is not contained wholly within any film because there is no comprehensive code to apply to the reading that will provide a complete interpretation, as is the case in classical aesthetics which believes in a common, universal code, and in Romantic aesthetics which believes in an organic unity of the artwork.

The auteur theory argues that any individual decoding of a film has to compete with the noise from every other reading that might have coded signals differently. No work is complete in itself, uncontaminated by other texts. "Different codes may run across the frontiers of texts at liberty, meet and conflict within them" (Wollen 2012:196). Meaning is not something neutral to be merely absorbed by a passive consumer. Reading/viewing is not an impartial action, but one of imparting judgement based on a set of codes. Wollen regards the degree to which a work challenges codes as indicative of its expressive power. The powerful artwork "overthrows established ways of reading or looking not simply to establish new ones, but to compel an unending dialogue, not at random, but productively" (Wollen 2012:197).

Albright (2014:4) comments on the involvement of the spectator in constructing meaning, which is "generated from the interaction of our minds with the intention that we imagine to have created the object we scrutinise … meaning exists when we perceive or intuit or feign the constitutive processes that brought a thing into being, and therefore brought a thing into relation with us" (Albright 2014:4). Similarly, Kentridge (2017) believes that art should allow space for the biography of the viewer to help shape the meaning of a work: "We know from every image we look at that it's always a

---

[27] Some might even regard the viewer's 'production' as a danger.

mixture of what the world brings to you and what we project onto it. The only way we make sense of the world is through this mixture of reception and projection, and projection is always inflected by the particular biography of the viewer" (Kentridge in Gnyp 2017:[sp]).

2.4.4 Narrative strategy

Valerij Tjupa(2014) defines narrative strategy as the application of specific narrative techniques and devices towards achieving a specific narrative goal. She states that "the approach adopted and the intended goal, which presupposes certain competences (creative, referential, and receptive), characterise the author of the artistic text"(Tjupa 2014:[sp]). In the devising of a narrative strategy in literature, a distinction has to be made between narrator (a hypothetical entity free to adopt any narrative strategy), and the author (an abstract semantic entity). Tjupa (2014) indicates how the narrator is "positioned in relation to objects and recipients of narration by the cognitive subject of communication (author)".

Tjupa approaches narrative strategy as "a configuration of three aspects of a single utterance that influence each other" (Tjupa 2014). These three aspects are:

- Narrative modality: The 'speech subject's' rhetorical competence. In prose, the narrative modality is that the subject has a narrative (narrator) and a cognitive (writer) aspect. However, more often than not, in lyrical poetry, the two aspects coincide because lyrical poets use their self to address the audience and communicate personal viewpoints. In animated poetry-film, the narrative modality extends to include the visual aspects of the film – the ability of the animator to create effect using style, medium, and method of animation to influence an audience.
- Narrative world picture: The sphere of objects of narrative interest. In the lyrical poem, the narrative world picture would be sparse in comparison to prose narrative, and in the poetry-film would be supplanted by the visual elements of the film. The narrative world picture would thus be expanded in the poetry-film beyond the abilities of language.
- Narrative intrigue: Tjupa (2014) describes narrative intrigue as "the aspect of plot that correlates the story with the recipient's expectations" (Tjupa 2014:[sp]). Although lyrical poems do not use conventional narrative, like narrative fiction, they do "feature a sequence of incidents (usually of a mental kind), mediate and shape it

from a specific perspective and present it from a particular point of time vis-à-vis the sequence of incidents" (Huhn 2005:17). The concept of 'story' does not sit comfortably in lyrical poetry, so 'plot' and 'story' are not really apt. Narrative intrigue pertains to the concept and content, and how it is relayed to invoke the required response in the viewer. In terms of the animated poetry-film, narrative intrigue could be seen to refer to the diachronic syntagm (how the narrative is made to move visually).

When applied to literature, Tjupa's (2014) definition refers to three separate aspects of the narrative. When applied to a visual medium, the distinctions between these aspects become porous, as the visual incarnations tend to overlap. In its ability to make propositions, language can more easily erect boundaries to categorise concepts.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I indicated the wide scope of animation and the importance of keeping the definition of the medium fluid to encompass as many moving-image tropes as possible. The fluidity of definition will afford the artist working in animated poetry-film a certain sense of creative freedom. I argued for animated poetry-film to be positioned within the arena of visual arts, rather than entertainment or literature, on the grounds of animation's potential functioning as a semiotic system and the correlation between the way in which narrative functions and meaning is read in painting and lyrical animation.

A major obstacle in the acceptance of animation as a philosophical process is its high dependence on practical and technical processes. I have demonstrated the link between thought and process and their interdependence, reflecting how practice and essence of animation are superimposed on each other. The animator is an auteur on multiple levels. Even when working with an existing literary text, the animator has to rewrite such a text as a screenplay, adapt it, and invent a universe in which to position the text. This universe of the film has to be authored in terms of a visual style to dictate its appearance through a design process. Finally, the animator authors the animated poetry-film by inscribing the diachronic category of the kine-ikonic, which is the physical process of adding duration, speed, and aspects of timing and movement to the synchronic aspect. From selecting a text to completing the film, this multifaceted

process constitutes the animator's narrative strategy and entails a unique combination of narrative devices for every individual text.

In the following chapter I will demonstrate how the particular means of filmic expression unique to animation can be applied to adapt and interpret fragmented, non-linear narratives in the animated poetry-film. The animated poetry-film has to strive for a textual and pictorial discourse that should be open-ended, suggestive, and non-specific. The discourse should invite the spectator to participate in constructing meaning, to decipher the textual, pictorial, and auditive aspects of it, instead of looking for distinct messages communicated by each of the media involved.

Chapter 3: Metamorphosis as narrative strategy

In the previous chapter my approach to animation was delineated within the context of my own praxis and of the possibilities of animation in the creation of poetry-film. The scope of animation was narrowed to that of 'experimental' approach, positioning animated poetry-film within the spectrum of fine art practices. I focussed on the role of the animation filmmaker as auteur of the animated poetry-film and explained how the poetic narrative is re-narrated in visual terms.

In this chapter the first of two opposing approaches to constructing animated films is explored, namely the process of straight-ahead animation on a solid base, also sometimes referred to as 'palimpsest' animation. The primary narrative strategy in palimpsest animation is that of metamorphosis. Metamorphosis is viewed by most theorists as a governing principle of animation, in part because metamorphosis functions on so many levels in the animated film. Metamorphosis is the basic method for creating movement, and is also a process for the evolution of form. Furthermore, metamorphosis can appear as a narrative strategy in terms of its function as a metaphor, thought process, and editing technique.

Metalepsis is a narrative principle closely related to metamorphosis and a trait characteristic of auteur animation. Metalepsis reveals how the artist consciously transgresses the boundaries between the 'world in which it tells' and the 'world of which it tells'. In this chapter I argue that metalepsis foregrounds the animator as auteur through the devices of technique and material. The metaleptic intrusion into the universe of the film affects the creation of meaning, and I will demonstrate the intrusion through an investigation of the work of William Kentridge (born in 1955 in South Africa) and Jake Fried (born in 1984 in the United States).

The functioning of metamorphosis as narrative strategy is analysed in my own film *Mon Pays* to establish the suitability of metamorphosis as narrative strategy in making an animated poetry-film.

3.1 Metamorphosis

Buchan (2013) regards metamorphosis as the fundamental principle of drawn and painted animation for its ability to impart life on lifeless graphic imagery. While animated forms are lifeless objects made from paper and paint, "the animation

technique and its underlying effect of metamorphosis create an illusion of sentience, intent, movement, and existence"(Buchan 2013:523). Metamorphosis – the transitioning of one shape into another – is fundamental in creating the illusion of animated movement, since metamorphosis occurs from one drawing in an animated sequence to the next (Furniss 1998:77, 78).

Metamorphosis has a visual aspect that depicts the act of developmental change, but it is simultaneously "an act of literal transformation which carries with it mythic and metaphoric possibility" (Wells 2007:202). What makes animation unique in its relationship to metamorphosis is that it is the only medium in which the transformation from one form into another is literally enacted before the eye of the viewer: "[T]he processes of change becomes part of the narrative of the film. A form starts as one thing, and ends up as something different" (Wells 2002:136). Although metamorphosis in literature is a common theme, it is a physical impossibility as the metamorphosis only occurs in the mind of the reader who follows the description of the author and imagines a result. In animation the imagined is made visible, as everything is possible, and made plausible because it can be seen. Transformations, spatial transpositions, anthropomorphism, and the outright denial of the laws of physics all happen in front of the viewer's eyes.

Fluidity is at the essence of metamorphosis. Fluidity is at the essence of animation; through metamorphosis everything has the potential to become anything else. In the animated film, every object, every frame is malleable. This potential to develop into anything whatsoever, this "plasmaticness", is unique to animation and at the heart of its endless expressive and communicative potential.

3.1.1 Plasticity and plasmaticness

The term 'plasticity' is derived from the Greek word *plassein*, and "connotes the act or capacity of moulding or giving form to a substance as well as the capacity of a substance to receive form or be moulded. Plasticity is a concept that connotes both passivity and activity" (Furuhata 2011:34).

Yuriko Furuhata (2011:27) proposes a view of plasticity as a possible characteristic of the material process of production and not merely an attribute of the finished product. Plasticity is the potential for malleability within the imagery and the process of image-

making: “Indeed, to rethink plasticity in animation at the level of the material process of production instead of simply treating it as an attribute of the end product of the image enables us to think critically about the importance of the medium of animation in today’s post-Fordist economy” (Furuhata 2011).

Plasmaticness or plasmaticity is thus an inherent characteristic of forms that enables metamorphosis to occur within such forms. This property is not defined by a lack of identifiable form, as it continually attains definite form. Such form is unfixed and unstable and can change continuously and represent all forms. Eisenstein (Buchanan 2016: 46) developed the concept of ‘plasmaticness’ in a series of essays written in the 1940s to theorise the appeal of the ‘rubberised’ and elastic figures found in the early animated films of Walt Disney. Plasmaticness refers to two aspects of the animated image. Firstly, plasmaticness refers to the organic ability and ease with which the animated object or image can assume any form, and secondly to the elasticity with which drawn figures or characters can move by virtue of freedom from the laws of physics. Figures squash, stretch, expand, and contract without regard for the physical possibility of such contortions in the real world. Eisenstein regards plasmaticness as a factor in attractiveness/beauty in the artwork: “a single, common prerequisite of attractiveness shows through in all these examples: a rejection of a once-and-forever allotted form, freedom from ossification, the ability to dynamically assume any form” (Eisenstein 1988).

Buchanan (2016) ties the loss of plasmaticness in the later work of Disney Studios to the ‘industrialisation’ of the animation production process and the implementation of a Fordist approach to making animated films. Fordism requires the breakdown of complex processes into simpler, specialised tasks. The result is a lowering of skill levels and a dismantling of the craftsmanship into chains of simplified tasks. This fragmentation results in the production line in which every individual worker has a specified and limited skill, and therefore can function more effectively and is more easily replaceable. A fundamental requirement of such an approach is an effectively arranged system to reach a predetermined outcome. “Disney moved further away from plasmatic flexibility of many of the early Silly Symphonies and coerced the animated form into a neo-realist practice” (Wells, 2013). Neo-realism impacted on the Disney style with visual principles like the preservation of volume to conform to realistic laws of physics and the

conforming to fixed character designs. Buchanan (2016:48) identifies an ideological shift in Disney's work, the "graphical 'anarchy" of the early work replaced with a moral realism which was reflected in the visual style resulting from the Fordist production process.

Furuhata's claims that plasticity can extend beyond the image into the materiality of production, is in a sense echoed by Wells and Buchanan. The end-result of the process of making an animated film from an authorist approach is seldom pre-determined, the precise outcome rarely established prior to production. The process is exploratory and improvisational, indeed plasmatic.

3.1.2 Metamorphoses as narrative strategy

As narrative strategy, metamorphoses entails three basic metamorphic tactics that will now be illustrated in the work of William Kentridge and Jake Fried. Although both artists make extensive use of all three metamorphic tactics, they do so for very different reasons and to very different effects.

3.1.2.1 Metamorphosis as tactic for transformation of form

The first level of metamorphosis, or metamorphic tactic, pertains to a surface level transformation where an object turns into another, unrelated object. This transformation is metamorphosis at its most basic, clearly recognisable level. The metamorphosis is a descriptive process through transforming figures and objects and narrates such figures and objects by detailing their intrinsic capacities. Wells (1998) regards this descriptive process as an inherent stylistic advantage of metamorphosis as it defines "the fluid abstract stage between the fixed properties of the images before and after transition" (Wells 1998:69). Examples of this kind of shape-shifting abound in most of Kentridge's films, for example, in *Mine* (1991) the mined landscape transforms into Soho Eckstein asleep in bed (Figure 1 and 2), or a coffee plunger turns into an accountant's calculation machine.

Figure 1. William Kentridge, *Mine* (1991). Animation, 5 minutes 50 seconds. Transformation of form to create metaphorical connections. Video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8TpcdmCTHo.

Kentridge accentuates the process of metamorphosis, transformation or transfiguration by leaving traces of the original object. By working frame by frame on a solid base, Kentridge redraws objects on the same piece of paper, imperfectly erasing unwanted parts, to effect metamorphosis. This kind of transformation "legitimises the process of connecting apparently unrelated images" (Wells 1998:69) and is an essential tactic for an artist whose work relies so heavily on metaphor. The mined landscape transforms into Eckstein asleep in his bed (Figure 1) and juxtaposes the toil and activity of the miners with the mine-owner's passivity, while denoting his ownership of the land, the mine, the miners, and the riches mined. The imagery is loaded with metaphor, and its metaphorical richness is accomplished through the specific creative process; the process of drawing, erasure and filming.

Figure 2. William Kentridge, *Mine* (Kentridge 1991). Animation, 5 minutes 50 seconds. Soho Ekstein's bed transforms into his office, leaving clear traces of the animation processes of drawing, erasing and redrawing on a single surface.

By contrast, Jake Fried does not work noticeably with metaphor and his work is infused with surface-level transformation. His films are all more or less 60 seconds in duration, and usually start with a white screen on which a rather complicated image materialises

within 2 seconds. The film is a process of transitioning from one image to the next (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Jake Fried, *Mind Frame* (2016). Animation, 60 seconds. These screenshots were captured over a 10 second duration, every 2 seconds, which demonstrates the intensity of the metamorphoses of the images in Fried's work. Video link: *Mind Frame* https://vimeo.com/183257013.

However, there is never a 'next image', as a transition is never completed before the next starts. In a constant state of evolving, Fried's paintings consume themselves while simultaneously giving birth to new imagery through the process of consumption. Only right at the end of each film is a conclusion reached, as the image is annihilated by descending into darkness – a blackened screen.

3.1.2.2 Metamorphosis as tactic for creating movement.

Closely related to the first basic visual level, the second level of metamorphosis concerns the creation of movement using the transformation of form. The object of the metamorphosis does not evolve into another, unrelated object, but instead (frame by frame) into a slightly altered version of itself. The extent to which two sequential frames

differ from each other determines the extent to which an illusion of movement is created, the speed, and smoothness of such movement.

Kentridge creates movement in his films by enacting metamorphosis on a single piece of paper. He draws a character, photographs the drawing, erases the whole or part of the character, and redraws the whole or part of the character. In so doing, Kentridge moves the character across the screen. Metamorphosis is caused between every two frames by incrementally altering the shape of the character or object. This constant metamorphosis is experienced by the viewer as movement. While reading the movement, the viewer is made very aware of the process by which the movement was affected due to the imperfect erasure of drawings.

Fried's animation does not focus on the creation of movement of figures across the picture plane. His use of metamorphosis means that the screen is constantly bristling with movement, as the entire picture plane is constantly evolving. In an interview with Caleb Wood (2015:[sp]), Fried states that the movement he achieves in his films is both a by-product of the working process and evidence of it. He regards movement in his work as an element of the constant evolution of an entire image, and not just as form changing position or scale within a frame. In Fried's work there is an interdependence between the movement through progressive metamorphosis and the image on screen at any given time: "Each present moment is an accumulation of all the previous present moments before it, a notion the films seek to enact by fore-fronting its process" (Wood 2015:[sp]).

3.1.2.3 Metamorphosis as structural tactic in the animated film

Among various metamorphoses that function as a narrative strategy, Wells (1998:69) mentions two that have structural implications for the animated film.

The first regards narrative agility in which metamorphosis enables the artist to re-invent established approaches to traditional storytelling by connecting seemingly unrelated images. The artist thus forges original relationships between objects, and this forging is an inherent metaphoric ability shared with poetry. This fluidity makes it possible for the artist to explore various kinds of narrative construction and avoid logical linear developments.

The second regards the structuring of a film using internal editing. Through metamorphosis of form, the film can transition from one scene to the next through the animation process rather than through post-production editing. Fried's work is an example of transition through animation as his films literally consist of a series of uninterrupted transitions. The animated transition is more focussed in Kentridge's films as they are used more specifically to transition between scenes for the sake of structuring a narrative. The two scenes in Figures 2 and 3 can again be used as example. In Figure 2, the narrative moves from a landscape with a mine to Soho Ekstein asleep in his bed. Conventionally this could have been achieved by a post-production transition or cut between the two scenes. Instead, the artist animates this transition. Instead of cutting from the scene of a landscape to that of a man asleep, the landscape transforms into a man asleep, and in the process the transition enacts a powerful metaphor of a sleeping (not-working) man's passive ownership of the mined land. Kentridge uses internal editing in his films and also often uses conventional post-production editing that fades to black and cuts between shots and scenes. Internal editing is always used for its metaphorical impact and its power for creating connections between seemingly unrelated concepts.

Erwin Feyersinger (2010:291) views metamorphosis as closely related to the trans-medial concept of metalepsis and regards both as central to the nature of animation. Metalepsis is especially relevant in auteur animation by foregrounding the creator and revealing the creation processes of an animated film. Through metalepsis the relationship between content, meaning, and process, material and production methods are revealed because metalepsis allows the animator to become visible as author.

3.1.3 Metalepsis

In literature, metalepsis refers to a transgression of the author or reader into the authored world, introducing themselves "into the fictive action of the narrative or when a character in that fiction intrudes into the extradiegetic existence of the author or reader, such intrusions disturb … to say the least, the distinction between levels" (Genette 1988:88). Gérard Genette (1988) refers to a sacred frontier between the 'world in which one tells' and the world 'of which one tells', and how this crossing of the boundary demonstrates the importance of the transgression, as the boundary "is precisely the narrating (or the performance) itself" (Genette 1988:237).

As in literature, metalepsis in animation refers to a "fictional and paradoxical transgression of the border between mutually exclusive worlds that cannot be transgressed in our actual world" (Feyersinger 2010:279).

From its very first occurrence in Emile Cohl's *Fantasmagorie* in 1908, the tell-tale hand of the animator reaching into the picture plane, and his creation subsequently communicating directly with the audience outside of that picture plane, metalepsis entails "the paradoxical amalgamation of two ontologically distinct worlds" (Feyersinger 2010:279).

A very early and very sophisticated enactment of the concept of metalepsis in animation is found in an episode of the *Out of the Inkwell* series by Max and Dave Fleischer, *Mechanical Doll* (1922). At the beginning of the film Max Fleischer is at his drawing board drawing the protagonist KoKo the clown. The audience is looking at the extradiegetic level (the level of first-degree representation). Rather, the audience sees at a representation of the extradiegetic level.[1] From Max Fleischer's point of view as a character in the film, on the paper in front of him KoKo belongs to the diegetic level (the world represented by the first-degree representation). Fleischer runs out of ink before fully colouring KoKo's costume. He explains his predicament to KoKo – reaching from his (fictive) extradiegetic level into the diegetic level of his character, who takes matters into his own hands and by jumping up and down uses gravity so that the ink at the top of his costume runs down to fill in the rest of his surface (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Fleischer Brothers, *Out of the Inkwell: Mechanical Doll* (1922). Animation, 7 minutes. KoKo colouring his own suit using gravity by jumping up and down. Video link: https://youtu.be/MXP0Izior1g.

[1] Being ourselves situated in the extradiegetic level.

The animator then phones the cinema projectionist who is waiting for delivery of the film Fleischer is animating, informing him of his predicament that he cannot finish the film as he has run out of ink with which to draw. The solution for the dilemma seems to be the 'removal' of the (fictive) extradiegetic level. The animator removes himself from the equation by instructing the character to go to the cinema using the telephone line, to perform the film directly on screen.[2] The character gets down from the drawing paper and enters the 'real' world. The character then proceeds on a complicated journey through this extradiegetic world to the cinema (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Fleischer Brothers, *Out of the Inkwell: Mechanical Doll* (1922). Animation, 7 minutes. *KoKo*'s journey via the telephone wires.

Upon arriving at the cinema, KoKo first enters a slide into the film projector with an intertitle "Sorry I kept you waiting" – an apology for the audience who has been sitting in the dark since the ink ran out in the animator's pen. This insertion of the intertitle implies an immediacy between the creation of the film and it being seen by the audience, and is an extreme example of the manipulation (subversion) of time in animated film. The technical production process of the film does not exist in any of the diegetic levels of this narrative. The animator draws the film that is directly projected as it is drawn. The animator draws directly on the screen.

KoKo proceeds by climbing into the film projector himself and is projected onto the screen to perform the film 'live' in lieu of the film reel. The question now arises whether KoKo is performing in the projector (as a film would play) or performing on the projection screen itself. The audience saw him putting the intertitle into the projector, and now the audience sees him pushing it off the screen. Is it being pushed off the

---

[2] KoKo's journey is not apparent at this stage of the narrative, as the audience only sees the animator telling Koko to go to the cinema (the animator's telephone conversation with the man in the screening room makes the destination clear).

screen or out of the projector? The two options present two different metadiegetic levels (Figure 6).

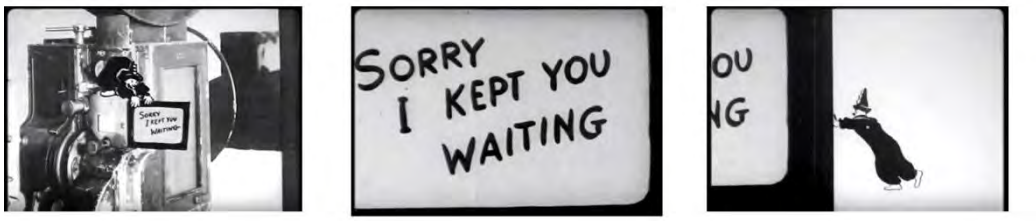


Figure 6. Fleischer Brothers, *Out of the Inkwell: Mechanical Doll* (1922). Animation, 7 minutes. KoKo introduces intertitles into the film from outside his diegesis.

While on screen the character becomes the animator, drawing the mechanical doll of the title on screen. After drawing her, he winds her up and by animating her gives her life (Figure 7). While she is dancing on-screen, and KoKo watches with rising admiration, the projectionist intrudes into their diegetic world by inserting the intertitle "Put some clothes on her. Where do you think you are?" The intertitle is superimposed on the characters, partly obscuring them. It is made clear that the extradiegetic world still exerts some influence on what is happening on the diegetic level.

Figure 7. Fleischer Brothers*, Out of the Inkwell: Mechanical Doll (*1922). Animation, 7 minutes. The character becomes animator, creating the mechanical doll on screen. The projectionist then interferes by communicating with the characters on screen using an intertitle.

Further metaleptic intrusion occurs when the projectionist oils a gear on the projector and some oil spills into the projection window. The oil runs across the screen, dissolving the mechanical doll until just a black puddle of ink remains. Both the introduction of the intertitle and the oil spillage might suggest that the performance is taking place within the projector and is projected onto the screen. However, we the audience sees the back of the projectionist viewing the film on screen from the projection room when KoKo (upset at the demise of the doll) flings the inkblot that is all that remains of her at the projector/viewer/camera. The projectionist staggers back and turns around to face us with ink splattered across his face (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Fleischer Brothers*, Out of the Inkwell: Mechanical Doll* (1922). Animation, 7 minutes. In this scene, KoKo on the screen assaults the projectionist, crossing the divide between intradiegetic levels.

Feyersinger (2010:282, 283) identifies six instances of metaleptic transgression in animated film that function between three narrative levels. The narrative levels are the extradiegetic level, diegetic level, and metadiegetic level. Most of the instances of metaleptic transgression concern the transgression of characters between levels, disrupting or altering the narrative, their own diegetic levels or the framed world to the embedded world, as demonstrated with a degree of complexity by KoKo the clown in *Mechanical Doll*.

Commenting on the developmental shifts that art forms seem to go through, Wells (2008) points out that an art form first passes through an experimental phase during which its conventions are established, and followed by a classical stage during which such conventions reach their equilibrium. Eventually, the art form reaches a mannerist or self-reflexive stage where the conventions become the content of the work. However, animation has always been self-conscious and aware of its illusionism. Metalepsis in animation is a "symptom of the medium's self-consciousness, its acknowledgement of being a fabrication, an 'arbitrary representation … at play " (Wells & Hardstaff 2008:25).

The only kind of metaleptic transgression not depicted in *Mechanical Doll* is that of extradiegetic intervention into the diegesis of the film – the crossing of the diegetic boundary between the animator and the world of his creation.[3] Direct extradiegetic intervention into the diegesis of the animated film occurs in the marks the animator leaves behind in the process of creation. Even though the authors may not be seen physically transgressing the boundaries between ontological worlds, their peculiarity of

[3] Even though this kind of transgression is present to some degree right at the beginning of the film when the animator is seen at his drawing board drawing Koko.

style and particularities of execution make the viewer very aware of their existence and their presence in their films.[4] Both Kentridge and Fried work in very distinctive styles and their films look and move in very specific ways. The viewer cannot look at the film for its narrative or de-contextualised content alone. The artwork is a conversation between the artist and the viewer, including both frames of reference. Besides being discernible in the viewing of his work, Kentridge's production process has been widely publicised, and the artist has coined personal phrases like 'stalking the drawing' and 'stone-age animation'(Carbone 2010) to heighten awareness of his process.

Fried's metaleptic transgression into the diegesis of his creations extends further than his visual style to include the technological aspects of his filming process. While Kentridge uses a very traditional way to capture his frames, working with film and a Bolex camera on a tripod, Fried embraces current digital technology of capturing the imagery in order for it to become a part of the animated film. Fried does not work on an animation stand and scans his artwork with a digital scanner after every alteration. The scanning process is not precisely controlled, and the Fried does not perfectly register the placement of the artwork on the scanner. This lack of registration is not corrected in an editing process and result in a film that 'shakes' when viewed. Fried consciously does not correct the lack of registration in his film. The resultant imperfection in Fried's process is evidence of his crossing of Genette's (1988) 'sacred frontier' and thus a significant aspect of Fried's performance.

3.1.4 Metamorphoses as a process of thinking and making

Buchanan ([Sa]) posits that animated metamorphosis can represent the stream of consciousness, not in terms of content, "but through how they behave, persist, transform and morph between substantive and transitive states" (Buchanan [Sa]). In straight-ahead animation on a solid base, the animation process can be seen as a process of improvisation "not merely capturing versions of the mental contents that were experienced, but also capturing something about how they were experienced and came to mind; about how one thought transforms into another" (Buchanan [Sa]). This kind of animation represents a visualisation of mental processes through the process of

[4] In Kentridge's later films, this presence is heightened further by featuring himself as a character – a performed character Kentridge-as-artist directed by Kentridge the artist.

making. Its functioning will be examined by looking at the practice of William Kentridge and Jake Fried.

3.1.4.1 William Kentridge

William Kentridge does not create poetry-films as such, but his films are undeniably poetic and use various poetic devices inherent to his animatic universe. Occasionally poetic phrases are used as text-on-screen and are propositions that are too abstract to be effectively portrayed visually without using language, like “Her absence filled the world” from *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old* (1991). Bendazzi (2016:310) refers to Kentridge’s films as being lyrical and suggestive, and saturated with metaphors to the point of presenting the very act of filmmaking – his specific studio processes of animating – as metaphoric acts that parallel the world outside. Maltz-Leca (2018) expands on the role and interrelatedness of metamorphoses as both a practical process and metaphor in Kentridge’s work: “By investing his studio practice … with a gamut of metaphorical meanings, Kentridge both defies the proscription on metaphor that has dominated contemporary art, and demands that we amplify the dominant understanding of studio process as purely the physical means by which a work of art is made” (Maltz-Leca 2018:2). With ‘amplify’, I take Maltz-Leca to mean ‘expand upon’, as she puts much emphasis on Kentridge’s reference to process, and how he keeps analogising drawing with thought and comparing animation with history. Kentridge (Gnyp 2017:[s.p.]) frames studio processes as metaphoric acts that parallel the world outside: “Art shows that we don’t simply perceive the world as passive receptors, but that we are constantly in the process of constructing the meaning of the world around us, as well as constructing our social selves” (Kentridge in Gnyp 2017: [sp]). Citing process theory, Maltz-Leca (2018:6) argues that Kentridge employs ‘process’ as a structuring logic and links Kentridge's metaphorics of process directly to his specific method of animating, which “united medium with content, the formal with the political, allowing a studio process to gesture beyond itself to the dramatic changes occurring in South Africa's political sphere circa 1989”. Whether the artist’s method of animating was ideologically infused to such an extent from the outset is debatable. Nevertheless, Maltz-Leca (2018:6) points out that Kentridge has come to regard his studio process as a structuring metaphor of his work and does regard his animation process, having transformation as its essence, as a significant metaphor for history.

Richard Penn (2009) believes that this link between metaphor and metamorphosis is essential in the reading of Kentridge's work. "It can be said that Kentridge's films are the morph at every moment … because metamorphosis and the narrative are linked metaphorically infusing the morphing process itself with its own powerful meaning. It can be said that in Kentridge, all action is delivered via the morph" (Penn 2009:34). Although I agree with Penn's sentiment, I find using the term 'morph' odd and incongruous with regards to Kentridge's work. He specifically works by hand, on paper, and leaves a trail of previous states of metamorphosis of his forms. The term 'morph',[5] in the context of animation, refers specifically to the gradual smooth transition from one form to another unrelated form using digital manipulation. The term, although derived from 'metamorphosis', originated in the 1990s within the context of cinematic special effects. The first instance of metamorphosis mentioned by Penn is a surface level transformation from one object to another, unrelated object. However, Kentridge accentuates the process of metamorphosis (transformation or transfiguration) by leaving traces of the original object. 'Morph' signifies a mere alteration of shape while 'metamorphosis' implies a change in the state of being of an object and has inherent metaphoric implications.

Both Maltz-Leka and Penn emphasise the importance of Kentridge's process while at the same time annunciating an odd misunderstanding of his processes. Maltz-Leca (2018:5) refers to Kentridge's animation process as "peculiarly quaint, notoriously slow, and fairly inefficient … and [of] amateurish quality", a statement that suggests a basic misunderstanding of not only the process but the very nature and history of animation. Animation as a creative process is by definition 'notoriously slow', and Kentridge's process is by no means slower than anybody else's. Kentridge produced nine films that catapulted him to international fame. He used his signature method of charcoal drawing and erasure, and manually filmed with a Bolex camera. This method makes using 'fairly inefficient' an odd choice of words. While I find 'peculiarly quaint' an uncomfortable choice of words, it is especially her referring to the 'amateurish quality' of Kentridge's films that denotes a point of view unfamiliar with the vast body of work by various

---

[5] Intransitive verb 'morph': to undergo transformation, especially to undergo transformation from an image of one object into that of another, especially by means of computer-generated animation (MW s.v. 'morph).

animators in a myriad of styles and techniques over a century of animation history. Elsewhere, Maltz-Leca (2013) describes Kentridge's animation process in detail, the slow process of drawing, walking to the camera, photographing the drawing, 'stalking' the drawing across the studio to make an alteration, walking back to the camera to photograph: "These circuits continue on and on for several months *until the photographic record of the drawing is filmed in sequence to produce an animation* five to ten minutes in length—a film that is a paean to the liquidity of change"(Maltz-Leca 2013:139, my italics). From this description I have to deduce that Maltz-Leca does not have a clear concept of how the process of stop-frame animation operates – that the photographing of the drawing by the artist with the Bolex camera constitutes the production of the animated film. There is no additional filming of the photographic record in sequence because the final sequencing of the film constitutes another process, which is the editing of the film. A remark by Maltz-Leca (2018:85) about Kentridge's use of trickfilm[6] techniques in *7 Fragments for Georges Mélliès* displays a similar confusion about the processes of filmmaking. She says, "the artist quotes Pollock's signature splash … *filming in reverse* so that a splatter of ink gets sucked miraculously back into its pot"(Maltz-Leca 2018:85, my italics). 'Filming in reverse' is a *contradictio in terminis* because the filmed footage would be reversed in the editing process (a process also loaded with metaphoric potential). Kentridge is specifically interested in the pioneer filmmaker Mélliès because of the various techniques he used to create fantastical effects in his films. Specifically, Mélliès was the first filmmaker to run film backwards "to be shifting time by looking at what happens if time could go backwards or, if you stop time, making adjustments to the world and then continuing, seeing all the performances of transformations one could then enact" (Kentridge in Buck 2016: [sp]). Patti Gaal-Holmes (2019:70) argues that an understanding of the making process significantly informs the writing about film. I find studying the working processes of a filmmaker, identifying the metaphorical implications of such processes, without taking the technical

---

[6] *Trickfilm* is a German term that is generally accepted to refer to early cinematic shorts which relied for their appeal on innovative special effects. George Mélliès work is exemplary and was a great influence on Kentridge. Typical trickfilm techniques are substitution editing, double exposure, the use of scale models to shift perspective, stop motion animation and running film in reverse, which was all used to magical or comic effect

and technological aspects of the process into consideration is to deny the influence of the technical aspect of filmmaking in the creation of meaning.

Penn (2009:28) in turn states that Kentridge is attributed with developing a "poor man's animation" with reference to the specifics of his process – using charcoal drawings on paper to create a film. Penn readily admits that this form of animation was one of the first recorded animation techniques in the early twentieth century and is thus hardly 'developed' by Kentridge. Writing from an animation perspective in an article in *Animation World Magazine* (1998), Philippe Moins regards Kentridge as a perfect autodidact of animation, unconcerned with traditional approaches and current techniques that "permits him to reinvent, with all sincerity, techniques discovered by the first animators at the beginning of this century" (Moins 1998:[sp]). What Kentridge does brilliantly is reinventing historical optical techniques – also seen in his appropriation of optical toys and 'optical illusion devices' into his art practice. With his reversal of filmed footage, he turns an outdated trickfilm technique into a 'lexeme' in his personal film vocabulary. He uses the reversal of filmed footage often in his later films, elevating the technique from a simple special effect technique to a characteristic visual ploy. Romanticising Kentridge's method as a 'poor-man's animation' is simply presumptuous when the laborious, and thus costly filming process and high commodity value of both his films and the artefacts resulting from them are taken into account. Kentridge is often quoted as referring to his technique of stop-frame animation as 'stone-age animation',[7] to be fair to Penn and Maltz-Leca, which is an unfortunate mischaracterisation of stop-frame animation that contributes to the overt romanticising of his technique.

Although widely celebrated, William Kentridge is a peculiar figure in the art world because his international career developed out of his animated films, a comparatively unfamiliar medium for the art world to contend with.[8] This unfamiliarity leads to the perception that his methods and techniques are peculiar or unusual. Within the animation community and animation academia Kentridge is revered for his contribution

---

7 'Stone-age animation' is always used within a pedestrian or fine art context (Carbone 2010).

8 Buchan (2007) finds the "discrepancy between the art world's relatively quiet and limited reception of and engagement with animation … somewhat puzzling considering the form's fine arts–based production methods and its often exquisite and powerful artistic qualities".

to the acknowledgement of animation as a fine art medium– despite operating as a fine artist mainly within the gallery and museum sphere. His position within the context of animation history, as well as the intellectual impact of his work is understood and celebrated.

3.1.4.2 Jake Fried

Fried's work does not aim to depict narrative through visual images, but rather the images and their process of becoming, are the message. Fried's animated films are defined by the constant presence of a rather frantic process of continuing metamorphosis, that Lavers (2013:2) compares to a "fast-forward flipbook". Fried regards himself as a painter and his films as an extended painting or series of paintings, with time added as a graphic element. Time becomes "a material presence in painting or drawing … Fried is adding time as a powerful experiential element to painting for the viewer" (Lavers 2013:2).

Fried's films are all more or less 60 seconds in duration and start as a white frame that quickly evolves into a constant process of transitioning from one image to the next. In a constant state of evolving, Fried's paintings consume themselves while simultaneously, using the act of consumption to give birth to new imagery. Charles Orme (2017) uses the term 'films of accretion'[9] to refer to works that "both show the process of creation and also the time it takes to make the work" (Orme 2017:6). 'Accretion' refers to growth and metamorphosis through the addition and accumulation of layers and matter to a surface, typical of straight-ahead animation on a solid base. Fried describes his approach to his filmmaking as a process akin to automatism and stream-of-consciousness:

> The work is not really pre-planned, so it does become itself through the process of making. But the 'ideas' are always in the background. I think if you're being honest as an artist, the work tells you what's next as much as you tell it. I fundamentally believe art-making should be a "discovery" process, otherwise I have no interest. I want to learn something new or follow some unknown path, rather than just executing a plan (Fried in Lavers 2013).

Fried's animation developed directly out of his painting and drawing practice that entails endlessly reworking and layering his paintings. He eventually realised that what

[9] 'films of accretion' is also sometimes referred to as 'palimpsest animation'.

interested him more in terms of creativity, was the process of evolution of the image, rather than reaching a 'final state'.

An exemplary work, *Mind Frame*[10] was created on a single high-grade piece of paper on which a drawing was started in ink. The drawing was consecutively scanned as the artist added to it in ink, correction fluid, and sometimes gouache and coffee. The physical painting resulting from this process is a thick and crusty piece of drawing paper that is never regarded as the end product but saved as a relic of the filmmaking process. In an interview with Neelon (2015:[sp]), Fried states that he has never been interested in creating traditionally animated films using individual cells[11]. He rather regards his work as an antithesis to mainstream computer-generated animation, describing it as a "human, hand-made rebellion" (Lavers 2013) against contemporary American culture.

Metamorphosis is process, message, and metaphor in Fried's work. The development of an image is not motivated or driven by a narrative – the artist believes in the notion of a collective unconscious to which he ascribes the imagery and symbolism that spontaneously surfaces in his work. A single narrative does not reveal itself throughout the development of an image or film, and instead multiple narratives are inferred by the viewer, all open-ended and overlapping.

3.2 Poetry-film as instance of metamorphosis in *Mon Pays*

Yuzo Kawashima (2019) proposes that the creation of a film based on a literary work – like poetry-film – should be viewed as an instance of metamorphosis, rather than an act of adaptation, as 'adaptation' implies mediation between various existences. The poem becomes a film rather than the film being a representation of the poem:
"Metamorphosis is origin … because it is a product of dynamic media conversion: From written language to a more high-tech medium that includes moving images and sound" (Kawashima 2019:5).

---

[10] *Mind Frame* (2016) by Jake Fried video link: https://vimeo.com/183257013. Hand-drawn animation with ink, white-out, and coffee. Sound design by the artist.

[11] Cel animation refers to the traditional technique of animation drawn by hand on sheets of celluloid. In Fried's statement this can be read to mean his disinterest in to traditional forms of, and approaches to animation in general.

In my poetry-film, *Mon Pays,* the dynamic aesthetic of metamorphosis and its inherent aspects of difference and change are realised at the level of content, medium, and even structure. In *Mon Pays,* a single sheet of white paper is subjected to a continuous process of transformation enforced on it by the artist. The metamorphosis is actual, as the image is physically transformed from frame to frame. In techniques like cell or replacement animation[12], metamorphosis is an illusion because the transformed (or transforming) image is only present within the film. The image never exists as a singular transformed entity in material form. In a palimpsest film, the final image of the film represents all previous images, from the first frame to the last, each superimposed on each other. The film serves as a documentation of the image's process of metamorphosis.

Mon Pays was made directly under the camera without design, script or storyboard, its conceptualisation was the result of a dynamic metamorphosis of thought through a stream-of-consciousness approach. William James (1890) coined the concept of 'stream of consciousness' in his influential book *The Principles of Psychology* (1890). He stated that consciousness is never stable and constantly changes like a river, meaning that consciousness is not 'without duration' within each personal consciousness. This duration inevitably leads to change in the experience of consciousness. Consciousness is a uniquely personal experience that differs from individual to individual due to current experiences that shape the individual's prior experiences. The history of experiences influences the current stream of consciousness.

Bert Olivier (2017) regards the connection of the concept of 'stream of consciousness' with art problematic because the concept denotes a mental state where conscious direction of thinking has been neutralised. He thinks that an artist in the process of creating a work of art "very rarely – if at all – gets into 'stream of consciousness' mode" (Olivier 2017:[sp]). Artists' actions are mostly conscious and deliberate, and they would regularly step back and reflect on their actions and processes, and modify or adjust aspects of their artefacts. Olivier admits that there have been many instances in which

---

[12] Replacement animation refers to any stop motion animation techniquein which interchangeable elements are used to create movement or change from one frame to the next,

artists have managed to adapt such a mental attitude to avoid steering the creative process in a conscious or controlling way, which is an attitude intimately associated with surrealism. He regards attaining such a state of mind as tricky, as artists should "lapse into such a passively experienced, non-controlled stream of consciousness and set aside the all-too-pervasive pragmatic approach, where the intellect construes the world in terms of juxtaposed, or successive, material objects"(Olivier 2017:[sp]). Olivier is referring to the traditional fine arts of drawing, painting, and sculpting where the focus of creativity is the production of a single object or image. However, in animation the single image is of little importance on its own. The importance of the image lies in its function within a stream of images, how it aids or disrupts the flow of movement. William James (1890) uses the analogy of the life of a bird to refer to the behaviour of consciousness, which could be applied to some processes of animation:

> Like a bird's life, [consciousness] seems to be made of an alternation of flights and perchings. The rhythm of language expresses this, where every thought is expressed in a sentence, and every sentence closed by a period. The resting-places are usually occupied by sensorial imaginations of some sort, whose peculiarity is that they can be held before the mind for an indefinite time, and contemplated without changing; the places of flight are filled with thoughts of relations, static or dynamic, that for the most part obtain between the matters contemplated in the periods of comparative rest (James 1890:243).

This analogy is rather descriptive of the animation process when working straight-ahead on a solid base. The 'perchings' refer to the substantive instances when the artist is acutely aware of the actions and processes of conceptualisation and the specific moments in the creation process when decisions are made on how to proceed from one stage in an 'unstructured' process to the next. When starting out creating the film from an empty white page, the artist should conceptualise a direction in which to head, such as animating a line across the wet paper as in *Mon Pays*. The process of animating this line could be referred to as a transitive state of consciousness due to the repetitiveness of the process. It is a process not consciously thought about while doing it. The completion of the line is set as an aim at the outset of the action, and a realisation of the action accomplished towards the end of it, at which point the next goal towards which to head is established and impetus initiated. The artist lapses in and out of conscious decision making and thought while moving from one decisive instance to the next. This moving in and out of the stream of consciousness can be observed in the rhythm of the film. There is rarely a concerted action across the entire surface of the picture. Rather

there are episodes of action happening in one area of the picture plane, from inception to completion, before the attention is shifted to another area of the picture plane. Slight overlaps of movement might occur as anticipation is created for an approaching sequence of movement while a preceding sequence is being completed. In the moment of 'perching', thought process transforms, initialising a new movement – a new direction in which the narrative will flow.

3.2.1 Automatism as a transformative creation process

In a sense, automatism can be regarded as the harnessing of the stream of consciousness. Automatism requires the conscious and unconscious minds to work in concert, seeking a conscious receptivity as well as willed passivity (Conley 2006:131). André Breton equated surrealism with automatism, defining surrealism as "psychic automatism in its pure state" based on the "actual functioning of thought. in the absence of any control exercised by reason" (Breton in Conley 2006:130). Automatism is a process that supposedly takes the artist down into the psyche, and for Breton also back in time to a state of innocence – an original creative state that has become inaccessible to the cultured adult. Breton suggests that any individual's personality could be unified through automatism if "the dissociation of a unique, original faculty" (Breton in Conley 2006:136) promoted by Western culture could be counteracted. Breton seeks to attain a state of purity – honesty, naivety, truth, freedom, authenticity, and the notion of the primitive – through psychic automatism (Breton in Conley 2006:135).

Choosing automatism as a creative approach for this film does not mean that the artist set out with these lofty ideals in mind. The particular circumstances of production[13] (the lack of control over some key elements) suggested a process in which further control is relinquished. The film was created without much conceptual planning, using the principle of automatism, which is "a conscious receptivity coupled with a willed passivity". Guided by the incidental marks made on paper and intuitively progressing from frame to frame, the resulting film makes visual references to words and concepts referred to in the text and conjures up a surreal vision of a country – landscape, clouds (or smoke of industry), and textured soil (which could be tilled, referring to agriculture).

---

[13] The particular circumstances of the production is set out in detail in Chapter 4.

From the animator's point of view, the content of the film remains unspecific and open-ended, encouraging an automatist approach to viewing.

3.2.2 Metamorphosis in Mon Pays

Metamorphosis is both narrative strategy and the driving narrative tactic in the film. The narrative is told in terms of movement and change. Wet paper turns into a landscape. The sky turns into a hand digging into the earth, a leaf turns into an eye, and later back into a leaf again, and so on. The picture plane is in a constant gentle process of metamorphosis. Once the landscape is established, small things move within the landscape, and small transformations occur. A single image constantly changes, although the transformation is much less severe than in Fried's work. As is the case in Kentridge's films, movement is created by repainting objects between instances of filming, slightly altering their positions. As with Kentridge, a trail of previous states of the image is left, as the act of 'erasure' using overpainting is imperfect.

Another correspondence with Kentridge is the locality of movement. Kentridge hardly ever uses pronounced narrative-driven movement or action across the screen. Instead, movement is contemplative, restricted to the turn of a head, the slight movement of a hand, a paper blown across the screen. His movement has metaphorical rather than narrative motivation. 'It' moves because it means something, rather than moving for the sake of telling a story. In *Mon Pays*, the movement shifts across the screen, from location to location, small changes happening at various times in various locations on the same landscape. In Figure 9*,* four screengrabs show various instances in the slow evolution of the landscape. The four images seem very similar considering their relevance to the evolution of the landscape and the duration of the film. The screengrabs were taken at fairly long intervals – 34 seconds between the first two, 22 and a half seconds between the next two frames and 34 and a half seconds between the last two frames. The total duration of the film is 3 minutes 35 seconds. The evolution of forms within the film is constant and steadily moves from one area of the picture plane to the next. Things move and change steadily and rhythmically – musically – for the entire duration of the film.

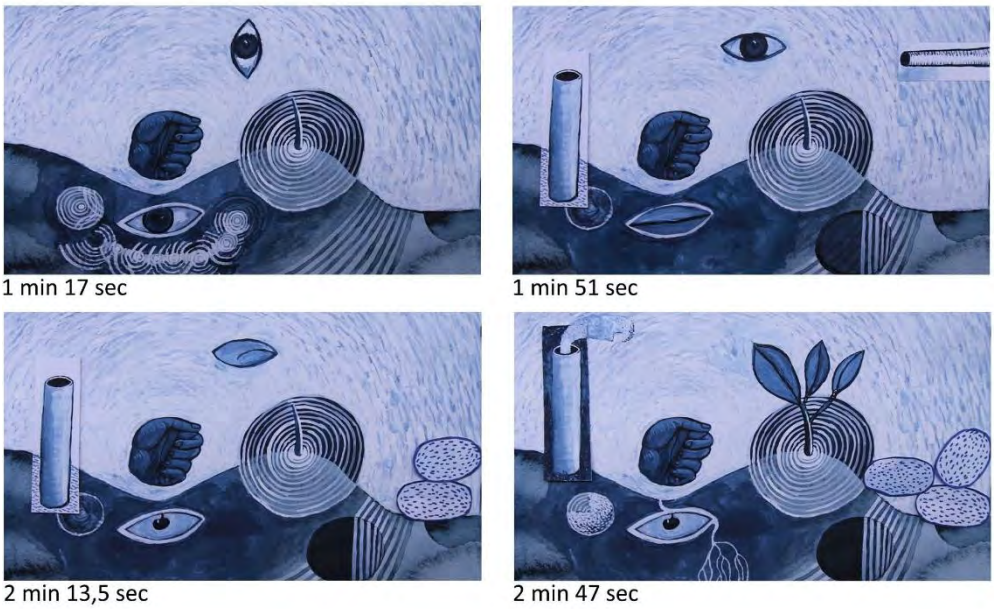


Figure 9. Diek Grobler, *Mon Pays (*2017). Animation, 3 minutes 35 seconds. Screengrabs from various instances in the duration of the film.

3.2.3 Metalepsis in Mon Pays

The metaleptic transgression of the animator into the animated world is less pronounced than with both Kentridge and Fried, as my persona is to a lesser degree present. Although the graphic style I used is fairly typical of my painterly work, it is not specifically characteristic of my animated films. The animator is visible primarily in the traces of activity in the production of the film – the visibly wet surface of the paper on which the images are painted, and for example, the change in appearance visible on screen as the water evaporates and the paint dries. The presence of the animator is also seen in the imperfection of the erasure and repainting of imagery. Cut-out paper shapes are also introduced into the painted world, suggesting a metadiegetic transgression. The cut-out shapes belong to a somewhat different world than the painted surface, visibly lying on top of the painted surface. Movement of the cut-out shapes is not created by redrawing and erasing, and is instead created by using replacement parts– a cloud moving across the screen is replaced as a whole for every photo taken, giving the cloud a different, more vibrant movement or energy from objects that form part of the painted surface.

On a conceptual level, the painted surface represents the natural world in the diegetic universe of the film. At the same time, the cut-out shapes can be said to represent the

un-natural, or industrial. In Figure 10, a waterpipe is drawn on a rectangular piece of paper that is inserted into the screen. The waterpipe excretes a drop of water that crosses the metadiegetic boundary and falls into/onto the painted landscape and affects a change to the landscape. The filmmaker inserts extradiegetic elements into the diegesis to effect change from outside the animated world, although these elements are metadiegetic, already belonging to their own diegesis. Both worlds are manipulated by the same agent.

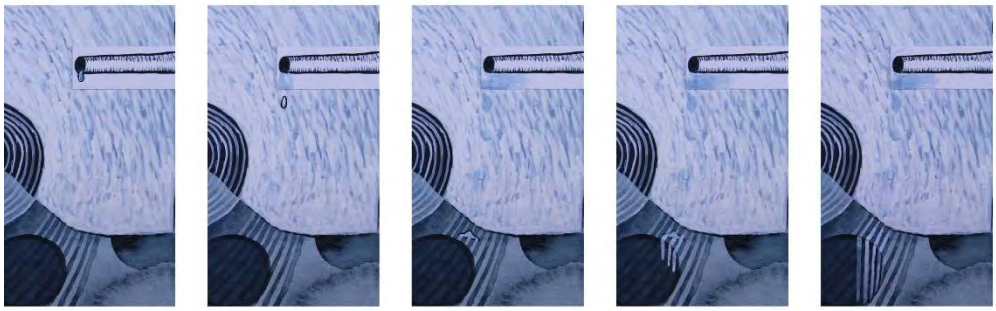


Figure 10. Diek Grobler, *Mon Pays (*2017). Animation, 3 minutes 35 seconds. Five stills of detail of a drop of water crossing metaleptic boundaries in *Mon Pays.*

At the end of the film the shape of a hand – up to that point painted on the solid base – loosens itself from the painted surface and becomes a paper cut-out while the landscape around it is engulfed and covered with blue painted paper squares. Clutching the pearl from the text, the hand is severed from its natural environment – the painted surface – both on a conceptual and on a material level. The meaning implied in the scene is communicated through the imagery used, and by and through the method and material of its construction (Figure 11).

John Pier (2016) points out that metalepsis can be associated with "laying bare the device", which is one of the key concepts of the Russian formalists. As such metalepsis enters the work's composition "via sjužet construction: more even than digressions, parallelisms, among others, it highlights the artificial relations between 'form' and 'material'" (Pier 2016:[sp]).[14] In revealing how imagery is constructed while it is being constructed, the artist transgresses the boundaries between the real world (in which the

[14] Within Russian formalist terminology, 'fabula' refers to the content of a story while 'sjužet' refers to the way in which a story is structured.

construction takes place) and the imagined world of the film (as viewed by the spectator). Animators reveal themselves as authors to the audience through metalepsis.

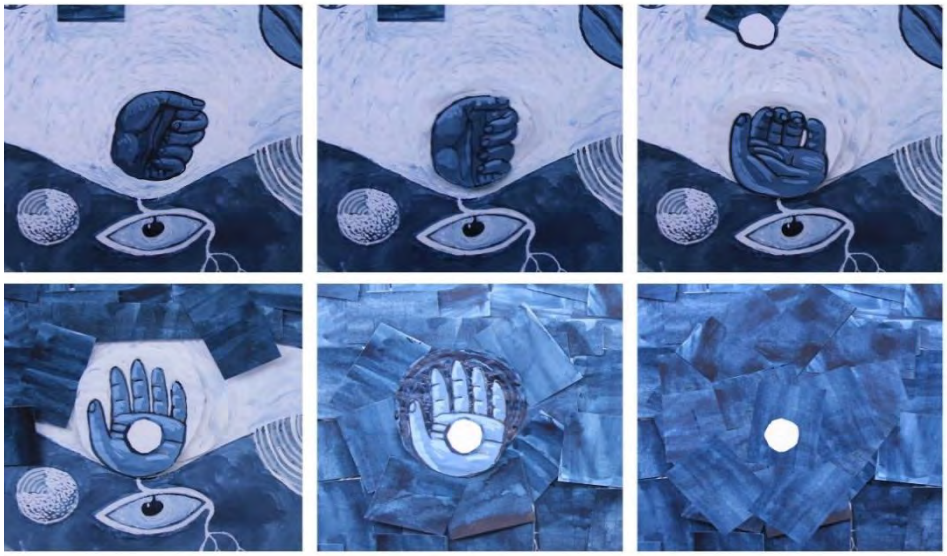


Figure 11. Diek Grobler, *Mon Pays (*2017). Animation, 3 minutes 35 seconds. Stills in which the crossing of metaleptic boundaries at the end of the film is depicted: the hand severs itself from the solid base to become a paper cut-out.

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I demonstrated how metamorphosis functions on multiple levels in animated film to create movement, evolve form, advance narrative, and function as metaphor. Metamorphosis is also both a production method and a way of conceptualising through the processes of free association and stream-of-consciousness. In doing all of this, metamorphosis serves to circumscribe the style of the animator. Metamorphosis enables metalepsis. It is through metamorphosis that the transgression of boundaries between the extradiegetic and diegetic worlds are revealed. The animated universe is a fabrication, and any alteration to the universe signifies the interference of an external force – the animator.

The auteur-animated film is a dialogue between the animator and the audience, and through metalepsis the auteur becomes visible. This visibility is essential in the animated poetry-film in which both the voice of the poet and the animator should be discernible.

By consciously revealing himself through metalepsis the animator deliberately transgresses the boundaries between the ‘world in which it tells’, and the ‘world of which it tells’, and takes control of the diegetic world, controlling the meaning expressed

through it. Not only does the animator has a camera as pen – in the sense of Astruc – but he also creates the language in which he writes.

By considering three related creative processes in three divergent lyrical films and establishing how metamorphosis infuses these processes, metamorphoses are proposed as an effective narrative strategy for the creation of animated poetry-film. I will further demonstrate metamorphoses in the analysis of the production process of *Mon Pays* in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Metamorphosis and the production process

In the previous chapter I looked at metamorphosis as an underlying principle of animation and how the various aspects of metamorphosis are revealed in the process of straight-ahead animation on a solid base. In Chapter 4, I will briefly delineate the three standard production processes and demonstrate how the author-driven animated poetry-film may subvert these standard processes by describing and analysing the production process of *Mon Pays*. Metamorphosis will be used as narrative strategy in conceptualising the film and in creating the visual material comprising it.

4.1 Aspects of the production process

There are five aspects to the processes involved in making an animated poetry-film that are intertwined and overlapping, containing implicit knowledge in varying degrees.

The five aspects of production are unpacked to determine to what extent implicit knowledge can be made explicit:

- Conceptual/Intellectual: Conceptualisation is an aspect of the creative production process that relies heavily on the ineffable, and on scientifically unsound devices like 'intuition'. Theresa Hardman (2019) states that intuition requires a shift in awareness from an intellectual comprehension of reality to a more fluid way of knowing, which opens a path to various other ways of thinking[1] that are useful in creative processes. Richard Brock (2015) proposes intuition and insight as a route to investigating tacit knowledge, as he views these two processes to be a link between the tacit and the explicit. Explicit knowledge of the conceptual aspect entails the selection of a suitable poem as basis for the film, and doing a literary and structural analysis of the text as it pertains to the translation thereof to a film. Explicit and tacit knowledge are combined in the writing[2] of a screenplay in which the literary style and narrative strategies are transformed into visual style, using visual narrative strategies. Conceptualisation continues through the processes of synchronic and

---

1 These anarchic ways of thinking include fantasy-thinking (allowing room for the absurd and impossible), and nomadic and peripheral thinking, which are described as "porous in focus, allow[ing] thoughts and ideas to emerge into consciousness without judgement or exclusion" (Hardman 2019:188).

2 The physical writing of a screenplay is not essential, but the conceptualisation of a visual turn of events is needed to make a film. The screenplay could also be recognised in retrospect and should a film be constructed intuitively and through spontaneous improvisation.

diachronic inscription. Intuitive decisions are constantly made about the processes of timing, spatial plotting, and design and movement principles.

- Creative/Practical: This aspect of the production process entails the formation of a visual style in relation to the selected text. This style includes both intuitive and calculated decisions based on the relationship between the concept and its perceived manner of execution (both tacit and explicit knowledge). The fabrication of objects and images to be used in the production of the film – while entailing a fair amount of explicit knowledge – relies heavily on tacit knowledge and artist-specific know-how.
- Technical: The technical aspect of the production process entails the laborious process of animating and filming objects or images frame by frame. Explicit to some extent, the technical animation process also includes a creative, performative aspect, pertaining to timing and unique aspects of movement that are personal and specific to the animator.
- Technological: The technological processes of capturing the animated images and processing such images through the use of a variety of computer software are predominantly reliant on explicit knowledge. In situations where technical processing also includes creative activities like editing and sound design, the creative and conceptual aspects of the production process come into play. In the analyses in section 4.3 and in Chapter 6 the various technological processes will be mentioned and commented on in relation to creative and conceptual aspects. Even though these processes are procedural, and often dependent on implicit knowledge of the animator, the processes are circumscribed by explicit knowledge that becomes implicit through practice.
- Spectatorial: As the recipient of the communication, the viewer is an essential part of the creation process. The audience's process influences decisions that the filmmaker will make during the production process. The spectatorial aspect also concerns how the film will be perceived. Although to an extent, the spectatorial aspect is a process in constructing meaning retrospectively, it nevertheless plays a role in the creative process. From time to time, the filmmaker takes on the role of the spectator to perform a revisionary function of the creation process, attempting to view the film from an objective point of view to try and evaluate the effectivity of the narrative strategies employed.

4.2 Pre-production

The pre-production process is the activities involved in preparing to make a film. Pre-production is the planning stage where the groundwork is laid for a project. Furniss (2008) spends the larger amount of the discussion of production processes on this phase.[3] Pre-production entails all actions that have to be completed before the manufacturing of the cinematic artwork can commence. Solo and experimental projects often develop spontaneously, which means that the clear delineation between production stages often falls away or is consciously erased.[4] In experimental work, some production processes are omitted due to budget constraints. Often some of the creative processes essential for the functioning of an ensemble production are omitted by the solo-animator. For example, storyboarding on a solo-project could be superfluous if the artist has a clear vision of how the film should develop. Some animation processes rely on spontaneity and improvisation and do not allow for too much planning, while some artists feel using a script or storyboard is restrictive.[5]

Furniss (2008) proposes a series of questions a filmmaker should answer at the outset of a project to determine the amount of work to be done and the best route to take the project to completion. The answers should theoretically enable the filmmaker to compile a production plan and cover most of the development processes. From script ("What is the central goal or storyline? What are the main characters or images that will be included? Who is the target audience?" (Furniss 2008:67); to design ("Which media will be used within the work? Which techniques will be used to realise the project? "Are there other works (animated or otherwise) that could provide inspiration for the current one, or perhaps compete with it? If so, how are they similar or different? What is the visual style of the work?" (Furniss 2008:67)); and technical aspects ("What are the aspect ratio and probable screen size of the completed work? What type of sound

---

[3] Headings which Furniss discusses under pre-production are personnel, development of the concept, pitching the project, scripts, sound design, timing, storyboards, animatics, layouts, scheduling and budgeting, marketing and promotion, rights and ownership, studios, style guides, and test run (Furniss 2008).

[4] Developing a project requires that much creative energy be spent on preparations aimed at raising funding, such as motivations to be written, extensive mood-boards, character bibles, and other visual material to be generated to sell a concept to investors.

[5] For example, William Kentridge values improvisation as part of his creative process (Penn 2009).

design will be used? How will the titles look and what information will they, or must they, contain? What technical resources are available?" (Furniss 2008:67). These questions are all relevant and handy from a managerial point of view, and address essential factors in the production of animated films with a commercial context, and some are relevant to the auteur animator.

The making of a poetry-film has its own pre-production procedures to add to this standard list. These procedures pertain mainly to the conceptual and creative aspects of the production process concerned with the process of transformation (adaptation) of a poem to film via the conceptualisation of the script. The pre-production stage of the filmmaking process is where the narrative strategy to be used is formulated and is discussed here as it has materialised for a decade in my own practice, and demonstrated with reference to *Mon Pays*.

4.2.1 Choosing a poem

Many factors should be considered when selecting a poem for a poetry-film project, as not all poems are suited to visual interpretation. Poems can be too descriptive or written in a very visual way, which might lead to a film becoming illustrative by default. On the other hand, some poems are too abstract and non-visual, leaving the artist with a lack of figurative stimuli from which to work. The following factors are points of consideration when selecting a pre-existing poem for poetry-film.

4.2.1.1 Context

The context within which a poetry-film is created is significant as it may be a determining factor in the choice of a poem. In the *Filmverse* (2014 and 2016) projects, the films were produced by the Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuur Vereniging (ATKV),[6] which meant that pre-existing requirements or limitations were in place, namely that poems had to be in Afrikaans and had to meet certain requirements to assure the quality of the project. A long-list of poems was compiled by a panel of Afrikaans language and poetry

[6] The 'Afrikaans Language and Culture Association' is a society founded in 1930 that aims to promote the Afrikaans language and culture. AKTV membership was limited to Afrikaans-speaking Christians, but has become more inclusive over the past decade.

academics from the total oeuvre of published Afrikaans poetry. From the long-list I compiled a short-list of suitable poems based on length, content and visual adaptability.

Anna Eijsbouts created her award-winning film *Hate For Sale* (Eijsbouts 2017) as part of an American initiative, the Visible Poetry Project[7] that teams up filmmakers with contemporary poets to make poetry-films. The project is scantily funded, so neither poet nor filmmaker gets any compensation apart from the film being presented on the project's digital platform. While eager to participate in the project, Eijsbouts was not satisfied with the poetry options presented to her. Wanting to make a personal and relevant film that could reach beyond the boundaries of the specific project, Eijsbouts suggested using a poem by Neil Gaiman, which was agreed to by the management of the Visible Poetry Project due to the writer's international profile (Eijsbouts 2020).

When the making of a poetry-film is not constricted by a pre-established context or production structure, the animator has freedom in the selection of an appropriate text. The following text-specific guidelines could be useful in the selection of a poem to increase the potential success of a poetry-film project:

4.2.1.2 The length of the poem

The length of a poem is a relative concept, as there is no direct correlation between the number of words used and the amount of content communicated. However, every word in the poem will feature in the film, and therefore will contribute to its duration. Lyrical poetry often grapples with abstract concepts, and the length of a poem could be taken to refer to the relationship between the actual words used and the complexity of the abstract concepts they address. In a poetry-film, the visual material should enhance and clarify such concepts. Poetic text uses layers of metaphors and meaning that require a focussed reading. Sometimes a poem requires re-reading, something which the poetry-film does not allow. A poem becomes too long to be transformed into a film if the visual addition to the poem fails to prevent the need for a re-reading of the text. If a lyrical poem is too complicated in terms of propositional content, the film might simply become too long to sustain the viewer's interest or attention.

---

[7] Visible Poetry Project: https://www.visiblepoetryproject.com

4.2.1.3 Relationship between length and duration

Words take time. Poetry-film contains words that are either audible or text-on-screen and the words have a very real impact on the creation of the visual imagery. The words impact the timing because it takes time to deliver the lines. If the poem is presented as text on screen then sufficient time must be allowed for the average viewer to read the text. When the poem is delivered as a voiceover, the filmmaker has more control over the timing of the film, as auditive text can be more readily paced. If required, lines can be read or performed at a faster pace than they could be read by the average reader.

A lengthy poem, with image-defying lines causes dead time in a film: periods where nothing significant happens on a visual level simply because the filmmaker is at a loss for imagery. Of course, dead time could be used structurally as a device in the film by purposefully presenting the viewer with a black screen, for instance. However, any structural device has implications in terms of meaning, so the device would depend on the nature of the film and the meaning of the poem.

4.2.1.4 Inherent rhythm

Animation is all about timing. Often the time it takes to deliver a concept via text differs from the time required for the visual delivery of the same concept. Auditive pacing and rhythm, which a poem must have, do not necessarily translate into visual pacing. A correlation between auditive and visual pacing has to be discernible, or imaginable to the filmmaker. Such rhythm is often visible in the structure of the poem on the page.

4.2.1.5 Content of the poem

The imagery used in the text should be specific enough to set a certain mood, and should also be open-ended enough to allow for personal interpretation. A poetry-film should be more than a mere adjusting of a poem for consumption via a screen and rather should be a visual expansion of a word-artwork. Konyves (2017:[sp]) states that three aspects of the poetry-film determine the viewer's experience of the work: " the artist's selection, modification, and juxtaposition of the work's verbal, visual, and audible elements" (Konyves 2017:[sp]). A good example would be the film *Stad in die mis (City in the fog)* (2016), a film by Jac and Wessel Hamman of the poem by DJ Opperman (*Filmverse 2*, 2016), in which the artists recontextualised the poem by

changing the implied narrator from a white man from a rural area visiting the city[8] to a black man from a rural area visiting the city. The socio-historical implications of that switch have a very real impact on the meaning of the poem and the viewer's experience of the film, by adding intertextual references to social issues like migrant labour and the apartheid legacy. The film is divided into two parts. In the first part, which plays out at night, the implied narrator is seen wandering through the city, feeling threatened by its appearance as it is shrouded in darkness. The verbal narration is placed in the second part of the film in which the viewer is shown a panoramic view of the city during the daytime, but shrouded in fog, and therefore still threatening, still mysterious, still not revealing its true self. *Stad in die mis* is a good example of a poem that is suitable for interpretation as a poetry-film. It is evocative but not prescriptive in the imagery it conjures up, leaving room for the artist to visualise the character, settings, and mood. The recontextualization of the poem through the animated film re-invigorates the poem to give it contemporary significance.

4.2.1.6 Appropriation of words

The animator must relate to the content and style of the poem. A poetry-film is often a fairly personal undertaking, and the filmmaker must be able to identify with all aspects of the literary work. In a very real sense, the animator appropriates the words of the poet to express the animator's own personal point of view. After interviewing animators on their adaptation of poetry, Rall (2020:348) concludes that the animator should honour the poet by "being similarly inventive and original in the adaptation" as the poet was in the original text. Rall regards the written text as a basic foundation on which the animator should expand and improvise to create a free interpretation that opens itself for interpretative input from the audience. Through the artist's visualisation, stylistic approach, and filmic interventions in terms of plotting, timing, and editing, the spoken word poetry and visual images are fused to create meanings and connotations stronger than those suggested by the poetry alone.

---

[8] *Stad in die mis* was first published in *Heilige Beeste* (1945). Within the socio-political sphere of the time, the implied narrator for the contemporary audience would have been white. The meaning of the poem reflects the sentiment of the rural idyll versus the industrialised, inhuman spaces of the city.

4.2.1.7 Case study: Mon Pays

(Video link: https://vimeo.com/281670374)

The six guidelines for choosing a poem in sections 4.2.1.1 to 4.2.1.6 are applied in the following brief analysis of the poem, which represents the first intellectual and conceptual engagement with the source material. This forms the basis on which the animator makes an informed choice of poem, and from which the first phase of authoring by the animator starts.

Mon Pays was commissioned as part of a live theatre project titled *Afrique mon désir*, which consisted of poems from French-speaking Africa, set to music by South African composer Laurinda Hofmeyr, and performed by Hofmeyr and the Afrique mon Désir Ensemble. I was commissioned to create a range of animated material to serve as visual accompaniment to the sung poetry in a series of live stage performances. The selection of this poem was done from 12 possible options. Several of the poems in the collection were of suitable length, with content that lent itself to adaptation for poetry-film. However, the main motivation for selecting this poem was related to its structure. Since the poetry was to be sung, most of the poems suffered structural damage in the process of being set to music. Compositions were not done around the inherent rhythm or structure of the poem,[9] and rather the poems were adjusted to fit into the structure of the composed melodies. This structural adjustment resulted in phrases of poems being turned into refrains and repeated without much regard for the narrative structure of the text. In some of the songs sections of poems were omitted to shorten a text, and even change the tone of the poem.

I selected *Mon Pays* because the length of the poem was suitable and because the structure of the poem suffered little structural interference in the process of being set to music. In the text of the poem that follows, the last three lines are repeated in red, as it appears in the text of the song.

> *My Country*
>
> My country is a humble pearl

[9] Inherent rhythm or poem structure that would be the preferable way to approach such a task in my view, as it respects the structure of the original poem.

Like footprints in the sand
My country is a humble pearl
Like the murmuring of waves
In the rustling of eventide
My country is a palimpsest
Where I strain my sleepless eyes
To hunt down memories.
My country is a palimpsest
Where I strain my sleepless eyes
To hunt down memories.
(Ousmane Moussa Diagana [SA], Translated by Catherine du Toit:2017)

The three repeated lines form a conclusion to the poem, and as such the alteration of the text is functional and not disruptive.

The making of this film was challenged by an unusual set of circumstances, which should not occur as a rule when setting out on a project like this: by the time I had to start working on the film, the music had not been recorded. The music was to be a major structural element, as it determines the pacing of the film. The pressing deadline gave me no choice but to start working and I relied on the inherent rhythm of the poem, trusting that the composer would do the same.

The poem contains strong, simple literary imagery, which is specific enough to set a certain mood, and is also open-ended enough to allow for personal interpretation by the reader (and by extension, the animator). The poet Ousmane Moussa Diagana describes his country as a discreet pearl, comparing it to very discreet and ephemeral natural phenomena. His country is a humble pearl “Like footprints in the sand” – which implies its transient nature, the marks left by a person are erased soon after their making, leaving no trace. The country (as humble pearl) is also likened to the murmuring of waves in the rustling of the evening. The transience becomes even more marked in the second comparison, where even the relative materiality of the footprint dissolves, and the country is compared to sound, the murmuring of waves and the rather unspecific sound of the lapping of water. In the second part of that comparison the image is dissolved even further, the murmuring of waves “in the rustling of the eventide”. Sound is attributed to time – the evening, darkness, when things are unclear.

The transient nature of Diagana's geographical environment (country) and the poet's difficulty in grasping it is condensed in the last three lines in which the country is described as a palimpsest (a document continually (imperfectly) erased and rewritten). His insomniac (tired from unable to sleep, unable to sleep due to his tireless search) eyes scrutinise the palimpsest for traces of the past. The reader might not know this country, but can identify with the sentiments of the poet transposed to their own country. 'Country' is not taken for its literal meaning and could refer to any environment that the poet/filmmaker/reader/viewer interprets as habitat and personal space. Also, the self is a 'country' as an embodiment of personal history.

The above brief analysis of the poem represents the first intellectual and conceptual engagement with the source material. This preliminary analysis forms the basis on which the animator makes an informed choice of poem, and from which the first phase of authoring by the animator starts. The screenplay creation runs parallel to and includes the poem.

4.2.2 Scriptwriting/screenplay

Narrative in the poetry-film has two aspects. Firstly, the script consists of the text physically present in the film, and secondly the screenplay circumscribes everything that happens in the film. Together they contain all the concepts the animator wishes to communicate in the film.

4.2.2.1 The script

The script of the poetry-film comprises the poem. The main focus of the script is to convey the message of the word-artwork. The script of a film presents the words that will be heard in conjunction with the visual imagery, either as dialogue, narration or text on screen.[10] Using an existing word-artwork as a point of departure in the poetry-film inhibits the filmmaker to the degree that the text itself cannot be changed. The text used as audio track or text on screen is set in stone if the integrity of the poem is to be maintained. The text is within the animator's control and can be positioned in time and

[10] The conventional script typically only indicates action and stage direction that impacts the actors' performances.

juxtaposed with specific visual imagery or sound. These measures of control are usually set out in the screenplay

4.2.2.2 The screenplay

The screenplay is the director's version of the script, providing all relevant detail circumscribing the filmic artwork envisioned. The screenplay may represent a radically different and parallel narrative to that of the script, as it represents the filmmaker's visual and conceptual interpretation of the poem. The screenplay of a poetry-film does not necessarily aim to convey a chronological narrative, but rather to create a visual environment within which the verbal narrative can be positioned. Filmmaker Peter Todd distinguishes between poetry-film and conventional cinema on the basis of its unusual structural and narrative devices: The poetry-film does things that sometimes … "poetry might do, such as different rhythms, repetitions, you might be dealing more with trying to conjure up a mood rather than a narrative" (Todd in Speranza 2002:[sp]).

In the animated poetry-film the animator works with a predetermined script that lacks a chronological narrative, thus giving no clear indication of 'what is happening' in the film. The animator has to devise a screenplay that would explain the images that will be seen on screen scene by scene as the text of the script is heard. I use 'devise' rather than 'write' as the former acknowledges the existence of a planned structure, even though the screenplay might not be physically written down. William Kentridge does not write a screenplay as a directive to create a film, but the existence of the screenplay as an underlying concept is proven by the existence of the film. For the solo-animator, the writing of a screenplay is dependent on individual working processes and is often not used. When a screenplay is written for a poetry-film its writing is often dictated by economic factors like funding, because funding requires paperwork. Eijsbouts writes of her process:

> I did not write a screenplay. I printed the poem and wrote some key words and possible happenings next to bits of text. And I tried to thumbnail-storyboard the shots that I was certain of in my head. It was like improvising with music or dance: you know the rough structure and the basic patterns that are the core of what you're doing, and then from there you just have to make it happen and see what comes out. It was a freedom I'd never felt before and also haven't been able to recreate since (Eijsbouts 2020).

The screenplay as an artifact predating the production of a film is not a necessity. However, as a construct the screenplay plays a role in viewing the poetry-film, qualifying

the discrepancy between the script (poem) and the visual material presented with it. The screenplay does not necessarily function as a document to guide the production of the film, and instead serves as evidence of the literary aspect of the authorship of the animator.

4.2.2.3 Script and screenplay in Mon Pays

The original poem was altered for the sake of transforming the poem into a song, as explained in 4.1.1.7. Because the poem is sung, the placement of text in time was also fixed – text could not be positioned or moved around to sync up with visuals. These basic limitations on the control over the major narrative strategies of timing and sound initiated a decision to relinquish even more control. I decided to use a process of automatism in the screenwriting process. The impact automatism has on the whole production process is significant as it requires an intuitive approach that is unusual for animated film (because of the planning and energy that goes into the pre-production phase). The writing of the screenplay coincided with the animation process. I made the screenplay up as I went along, informed by my analyses and interpretation of the poem. Since no screenplay existed before production, I will specify certain pre-production decisions that could be equated to screenwriting decisions.

The selection of an animation method is a decision made early on in the production process as the method employed has a direct influence on the media, style, and how the production process is structured. In this film, the animation method and the thought process guiding the creation of the film is closely linked. Straight ahead animation on a solid base entails the literal creation of a film one frame at a time within sequence, on a single surface. Guided by a loose conception of where the film is heading, the artist is guided by each frame created towards the next, making the film up during the process. Thus, conceptualisation is a continuous process that makes this a very intuitive method of animating.

Gouache paint on high-quality stretched watercolour paper was to be used. The medium influenced conceptualisation in the sense that the reaction of the medium to the surface would often suggest a progression in the film from one frame to the next. The perceived limitations of the medium also prompted using other materials on the film, such as cut-out paper shapes animated across the painted surface to avoid overworking and subsequent disintegration of the support surface.

The underlying theme of the film and poem is the ethereal quality of all things. The country is a palimpsest of things that have gone before and it is described through comparison to indeterminate sounds and volatile substances like water, evening, and memory. Some themes were predetermined and based on the analysis of the poem. The themes served as conceptual parameters within which I steered the improvisational process. The main theme was that of the country with its visual associations of a landscape like earth and sky, water and foliage. A secondary theme was that of human presence, first represented by the hand and then the eye. An additional theme related to human presence is that of human activity – the industrial – that presented itself during the production process. This plasmaticness[11] of the literary imagery in the poem is reflected in the fluidity of the medium, the technique chosen to animate the film, and the stream-of-consciousness approach in the 'screenwriting' and construction of the film. Anything could become anything else at any moment.

Three categories of symbols are present in the screenplay of this film.

- The first category concerns symbols that occur in the poem itself. The pearl, mentioned twice at the beginning of the poem, is equated with the country. It is a symbol of something valuable, something searched for, like the memories in the last line. A second symbol in this category is the sleepless eyes, mentioned in the second last verse, and repeated by inference in the hunting down of memories – searching eyes. A third symbol is the landscape – the country as palimpsest, where the footsteps in the sand, the murmuring waves and the rustling eventide are situated (as symbols of the ethereal nature of things). In the film, this landscape is visually represented as the ever-changing stage upon which all the other elements in the film are set.
- The second category of symbols is those inferred from the text: A symbol inferred from the pearl is that of a human hand searching for it, and symbols relating to the landscape – the tilled soil and the plant, of a seed sprouting and putting out roots.
- The third category of symbols is those that sprang from the animation process – from the free association and stream of consciousness approach that introduced

[11] The concept of 'plasmaticness' was developed by Eisenstein and refers to two aspects of the animated image. Firstly, the organic ability and ease with which the animated image can assume any form, and secondly, the elasticity with which drawn figures can move by virtue of its freedom from the laws of physics. (See section 3.1.1)

notions through intuition and “anarchic ways of thinking … during which the absurd and seemingly impossible are entertained” (Hardman 2019:188). The introduction of a chimney spouting fumes into the air, and a pipe spilling liquid onto the landscape has no relation to the text of the poem itself. They are added value resulting from the involvement of the animator as auteur.

4.2.3 Design

Design in animation could be defined as establishing a relationship between method, technique, and style, where *method* refers to a specific procedure for accomplishing a systematic task, *technique* refers to the specific way in which such a task is carried out, and *style* refers to the distinctive outcome achieved in terms of appearance or arrangement. The aim of design is to create a symbiotic relationship between style and content. Burn and Parker (2001) refer to “the inscriptions of the synchronic syntagm”, the individual still images that comprise the visual content of the film, without the addition of the temporal aspect. Design in the animated film is what the film looks like before it moves.

4.2.3.1 Layout

Layout is an aspect of animated film that forms a major part of the pre-production process of commercial productions with regard to conventional chronological narratives. Layout is often absent from experimental or auteur films. Layout refers to the process of conceptualising sets or environments for the animated film based on the style and the narrative of the project. The layout artist designs the stage on which the action is played out and is concerned with the functionality of the space in terms of relaying the story (Jeaks & Tetali [Sa]). Layout is less of a concern in lyrical narratives that often do not involve the movement of a character through a specific and logical space.

In experimental film, the term ‘layout’ functions in a more traditionally formal manner, concerning the use of the format of the screen. Layout is both the placement of objects within the pictorial space and the movement of shapes across the screen and the movement through time.

The strong graphic style(s) in Sasha Svirsky’s *9 Ways to Draw a Person* (Svirsky 2015) (video link: https://vimeo.com/279353673) is a good demonstration of layout contained within the frame of the screen. The world of the film (or of the individual segments) does not extend beyond the confines of the screen, and the shapes and figures move

within it. The figures that appear in the film are not characters. Instead, they are concepts or visual representations of concepts (Figure 12). The figures only exist in the moment it takes to convey their significance. They have no narrative to carry them forward, no reason to exist beyond that moment and beyond the parameters of the screen.

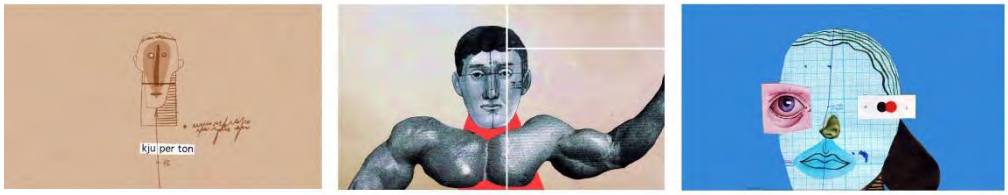


Figure 12. Sasha Svirsky, *9 Ways to Draw a Person* (Svirsky 2015). Animation, 6 minutes 30 seconds.

They are kine-iconic units used by the animator to make visual propositions.

4.2.3.2 Storyboard

The storyboard is a visual representation of the screenplay and functions as a production planning document. In a studio setup where production is decentralised, the storyboard is essential to ensure that all creatives follow the same vision. In creating the storyboard, the director determines the viewer's viewpoint by selecting camera angles, depth of field, scope, and nature of shots. In the conventional approach to animated film, the storyboard is an editing tool. The animated film is meticulously planned and (to an extent) edited before production even begins to avoid overproduction, which is costly in terms of time and labour.

Storyboarding is typically a step in the production process that the independent and solo-animator will omit. Although not the only reason, the most important reason would be that over-planning kills spontaneity and improvisation. Spontaneity and improvisation are not often associated with animation, and rather are regarded as aspects of real-time performance. Acting on instinct, ad-libbing, and feeding off external stimuli in a performance seem like contradictory terms to use with regard to animation due to the slow production speed of the medium. However, spontaneity and improvisation are the driving forces behind much experimental animation. Eijsbouts (Eijsbouts 2020) explains her process:

> Everything grew together quite organically, so some things changed, some things just happened as they had nothing to really change from, etc. in terms of the exact 'story' of the film. However, the meaning did not change, nor the appearance or significance. It just became clearer what these things were as I went along, slowly uncovering how all of this could be conveyed within the boundaries I'd set myself as I started (loose storyline, characters, technique, visual style and general 'feel' (Eijsbouts 2020).

Therefore, the use of a storyboard is dependent also on the animation technique or method used in the film and the style selected. For example, cell-animation would usually require a fairly detailed storyboard as actions are planned according to keyframes. In a stop-frame film, physical objects are animated under the camera, and the individual film frames do not have a material existence other than the instant recorded on film. The storyboard can be simpler and condensed to include the planning of camera angles and major moments that are starting points for a process of intuitive animation.

4.2.3.3 Animatic

Lockwood et al. (2007:[sp]) define the animatic as a roughly–animated version of the intended film, the purpose of which is "to explore visual ideas easily, without refining motion to a detailed performance". The animatic is generated using hand-drawn storyboards and is intended to communicate the director's cinematographic intent. The animatic would often contain the pre-recorded voice work and sound effects and is useful in projects where a predetermined duration is established. The more conventional the narrative, the more useful the animatic in terms of establishing timing of actions. Similar to a detailed storyboard, the animatic is a step in the pre-production process that is often abandoned or avoided by the independent or solo animator for fear of losing creative energy by over-planning a project.

In *Mon Pays*, using automatism meant that the premeditated design phase of the pre-production process was also skipped. Working from a white page, the design of the film was left to the automatic process that led to using a simplified personal signature style. In sympathy to the content of the poem, I opted for an earthy aesthetic that relied heavily on the materiality of the paint and paper from which the animation was created. I wanted the film to have an obviously hand-crafted appearance, which would reveal the presence of the animator through the traces of the making process still visible in the footage. The concept of the country as a palimpsest is directly interpreted in the medium and the process by which the imagery in the film is created – in the layering of

paint and the continuous repainting; revealing imagery and re-covering the imagery; or overpainting in new imagery. Orme (2017) calls the results of this palimpsestic method 'films of accretion' or 'palimpsest animation' (Orme 2017:6).

Due to the peculiar circumstance of the soundtrack being unavailable, the planning process was condensed. Practical pre-production was limited to setting up an overhead shooter (animation workstation, lighting and camera), setting up support (attaching the watercolour block to the animation table to prevent it from moving while working, painting, and filming on it), setting up materials and tools, and studying the poem.

4.3 Production

Production entails what Burn and Parker (2001) refer to as inscriptions of the diachronic: "creating the temporal aspects of the moving image by combining individual images: making duration, speed, movement" (Burn & Parker 2001:9). The production process in *Mon Pays* is very direct, as procedural and technological interferences are almost absent.

Metamorphosis is the main narrative strategy in *Mon Pays*. There is a close relationship between metamorphosis as narrative strategy and the frame-by-frame process used to create the film. The process is very direct and intuitive. The artist literally works from one frame to the next, creating, and then continuously altering an existing image. Historically, this method was one of the first processes used to create animated film. It is often employed by independent, auteur animators wishing to retain an element of spontaneity and improvisation in their work. The method is ideal when working with traditional artists' media – paint on paper or glass, charcoal, or techniques that employ pliable, non-permanent materials, like sand or clay-painting. The frame-by-frame process differs from keyframe animation in that it is less controlled and leaves room for improvisation. In keyframe-animation, the action is divided into increments that are defined by keyframes. The keyframes define specific moments in the action, and usually, a scene is plotted out with keyframes, after which the in-between frames are created. Norman Maclaren said of animation that "what happens between each frame is much more important than what exists on each frame" (Maclaren in Furniss 1998:5). This 'inbetweenness' is meaningful regarding frame-to-frame animation as the process of creating an image inspires the creation of the successive image.

In an animated film where recorded voice is used, it is customary to have the recording available when production starts, as the voice has a very direct influence on the timing of a film. More so with this film, as the poetry was being sung, and a song includes accompaniment and thus very time-specific sound effects. However, the soundtrack was not available when production started, and due to pressing timelines, I had to start working without the music that was the most important pre-production element for a project of this nature. In part motivated by the initial absence and general lack of control over the soundtrack, the concept of automatism seemed to be a suitable way in which to proceed, thus further relinquishing control over the creative process to chance and improvisation. Keeping in mind the images mentioned in the text, I started working directly under the camera, working frame by frame without a calculated plan, design, script, or guideline. Thus, conceptual visualisation, design, and scripting coincided with the production process.

The film was painted on stretched watercolour paper[12] with gouache paint. I worked with two colours only: White, and a brand-specific Payne's gray. Payne's grey manufactured by French manufacturer Linel is unusual in having a slight bluish tint to it compared to Payne's grey in more common high-quality brands like Windsor and Newton. The Linel paint is also much darker than Payne's grey gouache available in other brands. When used, the grey achieves really dark tonal values without the addition of black. The colour was mixed with Lucas' permanent white to achieve a wide range of tonal values. The quality of the support is of importance as the entire film was made on a single surface – adding, altering and repainting. The danger existed from the outset that the surface would deteriorate if worked too rigorously. Therefore, paint was applied thinly at the outset, working in washes as with watercolour.

The style used in the film resulted from the process followed and the medium in which I worked. When the animator uses an improvisational technique like straight ahead animation on a solid base, it is very difficult to adhere to predetermined designs. The animator tends to revert to an inherent personal mode of image making, where the hand follows instinct from one frame to the next. Straight ahead animation is one of the oldest animation processes and one often employed by independent, auteur animators.

[12] The paper was manufactured by Arches: Weight of the paper 300 grams, 100% cotton rag.

For instance, Kentridge draws and redraws charcoal drawings, leaving a signature trail of previous frames in his films. Other animators working in a similar vein include Florence Miaillle (France) and Caroline Leaf (Canada). Straight ahead animation is ideal when working with traditional 'artists' media – paint on paper or glass, charcoal, or techniques that employ pliable, non-permanent materials, like sand or clay-painting.

4.3.1 Method

The 300-gram Arches 100% cotton-stretched watercolour paper in a commercially stretched watercolour block is affixed to the animation table. An overhead shooter that consists of a table surface, with an affixed camera approximately 80 cm above that faces down at the table surface (Figure 13).

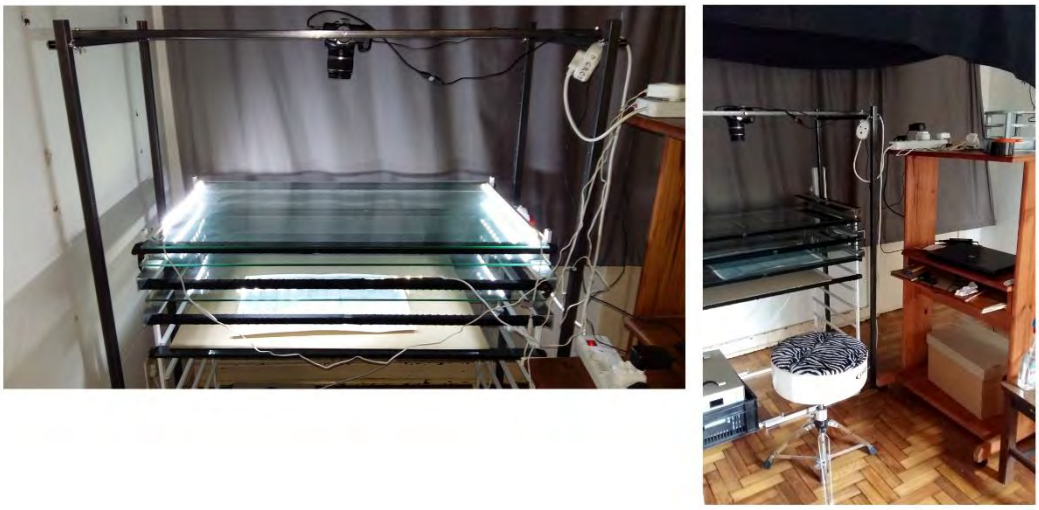


Figure 13. Stop-motion animation rostrum: Multiplane down-shooter.

The camera is connected to a laptop, which functions as a capturing device via Take5 stop-frame animation software. The paper is affixed to the table to prevent any movement that might affect the stability of the visual image. The paper is lit from above with LED strip-lighting. The electrical appliances (lights, camera, and laptop) are connected to a voltage regulator that ensures that the electricity supply is stable at 220V to avoid flickering in the recorded footage. The animator paints at the table, regularly photographing the image to record the changes made to the image. The film records the continuous metamorphosis of an image for the 3 minutes of the total 3 minutes 32 seconds duration.

I started by wetting the paper, and randomly dropping drops of watery paint onto it, filming a frame after each action, and shooting frames while the paint spread over the wet paper of its own accord. I then guided the splashed paint with a brush[13] until it formed a horizon line and I shaped a rudimentary landscape (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Diek Grobler*, Mon Pays* (2017). Animation, 3 minutes 35 seconds. Initiating sequence: The reflection of light on the wet paper can be seen and the change in colour as the paint dries.

After guiding a line across the pictorial surface, I allowed the paper to dry (while periodically shooting a frame) before continuing. The drying causes the colour to change on screen. The Linel Payne's grey gouache has a substantially bluer hue when wet than when is dry. The shiny and wet surface of the paper also dulls as the water evaporates. The landscape metamorphoses continuously, markings appear and disappear.

At 1 minute 18 seconds two rectangular shapes are introduced on the picture plane. These consist of separate pieces of paper placed on top of the painted picture plane. The first shape grows from a small square right on the picture plane, using replacement animation[14] to affect the growth. The square grows to be a tall vertical rectangle on the left side of the screen. The second shape enters the picture plane fully formed. It enters slowly from the right of the screen, a long horizontal rectangle that does not enter the screen fully and remains partly off-screen. After a few seconds, two tubular forms appear on the two pieces of paper, a chimney grows on the left and a waterpipe on the

---

13 Painting was done off-camera, in between shots: The brush does not intrude into the image, even though traces of its presence are left behind in the visibly wet brush-strokes.

14 Replacement animation refers to metamorphosis or change being affected by replacing an object with a similar one in sequential shots: an object grows by replacing it with a similar object of slightly bigger size for every subsequent shot in a sequence.

horizontal rectangle. After a few seconds, the waterpipe emits a single drop of water before its support slowly leaves the screen as it had entered. The chimney starts to spew smoke clouds that form and move across the screen using replacement animation. Replacing the shape with another similar shape for every frame filmed (rather than just moving a single cut-out shape across the picture plane) effects a continuous metamorphosis in the smoke clouds. The clouds constantly change shape slightly as they move across the screen.

The reason for introducing these objects on separate supports to the picture plane rather than painting them (as is done with the features of the landscape itself) is both practical and conceptual. Conceptually the pieces of paper with painted objects introduce unnatural elements to the landscape – a chimney is painted on the first piece of paper that later spews cut-out smoke clouds, and a waterpipe on the second piece. Both pieces of paper leave the image later in the film. Their departure introduces the practical reason for their introduction – if the imagery was painted on the same support as the landscape, the surface of the support would have become too distressed as a result of the constant repainting.

Traces of the presence of the animator are visible right through the film. Forms are imperfectly painted out and repainted as they move over the picture plane, leaving a trail of former positions. This trail is due to the nature of the medium, as gouache remains water soluble when dry, not allowing for complete overpainting. Later in the film cut-out paper shapes are placed on top of the painted surface and animated across it. The visible physical difference in material jeopardises the consistency of the depicted world. The manner of the depicted world's movement is further proof of the animator's presence – a manipulator controlling the world.

4.4 Post-production

As a creative phase in filmmaking, post-production is centred around the process of editing. Doğa Çöl (2018:33) uses the analogy of a house to accentuate the importance of editing, referring to pre-production and production as the design and manufacture of the bricks, while post-production equates with the building of the house. In animation, the boundaries between the creative phases are porous. Pre-production, production, and post-production fuse on various levels. Editing often happens at the pre-production

phase through storyboarding, and in the production phase through animated transitions.

Theory is extensively applied to editing as a post-production structuring process[15] in the creation of an animated film in Chapter 5, and explored in praxis in Chapter 6. In the case of *Mon Pays*, editing is virtually absent from the post-production phase of the film. The production process of the film was conceived to drive the narrative – the image is made to emerge from a blank surface (or white screen) and continuously evolve until the end (a resolution in the narrative is reached). There are no cuts in the film, and no montage. Post-production editing is limited to adding the soundtrack and adjusting the pace of the movement (the frame rate) to suit the timing and mood of the song.

Sound design, especially music and voice work, is often not seen as a post-production process in animation as both might be required to determine and structure timing in a film. In both *Mon Pays* and *Parys suite,* the relationship between the film and the soundtrack is atypical. In *Mon Pays,* the soundtrack was created independently of the film and exists as a song apart from the visual aspect of the film. The film had to be grafted on to the song, removing the soundtrack as a narrative device. I only received the soundtrack when 85% of the animation had been done. When the musical soundtrack was put to the film, the mood felt right, but the animation was too fast. The animation was shot in twos (taking two photographs every time the artwork under the camera was filmed), which means that 12 images are displayed per second when the film is screened. The animation had to be slowed down to more or less eight images per second (each visible for three frames) to get the pacing right. The pacing of the visuals then fitted the pacing of the music perfectly. Despite having no control over the sound and music, a few serendipitous occurrences of syncresis in the soundtrack can be observed – sounds in the accompaniment syncing with visual elements, for example, an accordion playing as a ribbed chimney materialises on screen, a singular drumbeat as a white square appears on screen. These are happy accidents and are rather contrary to the nature of sound design for animation, usually calculated by the frame and the second. These synchronised moments of sound and image corresponding are a unifying

---

[15] Keep the porousness of the distinction between pre-production, production, and post-production in experimental praxis in mind.

factor in the film. The synchronised moments offer suggestions of diegetic sound, where sounds are perceived to be caused by objects or occurrences in the film itself.

In *Parys suite* the opposite is true. The music, voice, and sound effects are at the animator's disposal to be manipulated and applied as required for narrative potential in the editing process. Therefore, sound as a narrative device in the editing process will be explored in Chapter 5.

4.5 Conclusion

Building on the conclusions made in Chapter 3 regarding the role of metamorphosis as a narrative strategy, I set out in this chapter to circumscribe the creation of a film in which those conclusions are demonstrated. Therefore, in this chapter, I briefly delineate the conventional production process to demonstrate how the creation of an animated poetry-film might diverge from such a process. The analysis of the production of *Mon Pays* is used to demonstrate this divergence and test the functioning of metamorphosis as a definitive narrative strategy in poetry-film.

Given that the film was made under specific predetermined conditions, the focus in this chapter and the making of the film is on the physical fabrication of the poetry-film. The physicality of the material and the action of film construction is embedded in the narrative strategy because metamorphosis is physically enacted on the surface of the painting. The entire working surface – the stage on which the narrative is played out – is a site of continuous metamorphosis. The creative impulse driving the physical fabrication of frame upon frame was similarly dependent on metamorphoses. The screenplay is non-specific and intuitive, and depended on the fluidity allowed by the narrative strategy. The possibility of metamorphosis from one frame to the next means that anything could happen next, and any shape could turn into anything whatsoever.

The liberation of the creative production process of the *Mon Pays* film from the requirements of the conventional structured filmmaking process resulted in an animated film that is spontaneous, intuitive, and poetic.

Chapter 5: Editing as narrative strategy

In Chapters 3 and 4 the animation production process was explored as it evolves in an organic manner from the first empty frame, frame by frame until the process' conclusion through the narrative strategy of metamorphosis. I argued that metamorphosis, functions on multiple levels as a governing principle in animation. Metamorphosis is the basic method for creating movement, a process for the evolution of form, and a direct editing technique. As visual narrative strategy in the animated poetry-film, metamorphosis also steers the process of conceptualisation in an organic, intuitive manner.

In this chapter editing as narrative strategy is investigated. The narrative strategy is to take a diametrically opposite approach – one in which the film is constructed in 'hindsight' with editing as a primary structuring approach. This strategy is not possible with all kinds of animation, and indeed not desirable with most, as it presupposes a repository of animated material from which to work. Since animation is laborious, time consuming, and therefore expensive, few traditional animation techniques would allow for this approach as it could mean months of work landing 'on the cutting room floor'. The filmmaker requires a database of footage from which to compose a film to use editing as a narrative strategy. In database filmmaking the moving imagery is not created for a predetermined narrative and rather is collected as a database to be structured in post-production.[1] Database filmmaking is examined as it is related to editing as narrative strategy.

The argument here is that editing as narrative strategy functions in a similar way as writing. Concepts are formed and ideas expressed by combining, juxtaposing, and manipulating cinematic 'lexemes' (still images, filmed and constructed footage, and sound) from a 'retrospective' position. In animated poetry-film, filmic language exists in a symbiotic relationship with the lyrical poem on a communal timeline where they function at times in unison and in contrast or juxtaposition. The visual, literary, and

---

[1] The delineation between pre-production, production, and post-production in animated film becomes uncertain in more 'experimental' approaches. In database filmmaking I would regard editing as a production and not a post-production process.

auditive modes are combined through the editing process to construct a unified, multimodal narrative.

Database filmmaking uses various techniques and processes. In addition to more conventional processes of drawn and stop-frame animation, processes are explored that are very reliant on the process of editing and accentuate the 'gaps' between the frames of animated film. Specific attention is paid to 'disrupted-image animation', which is a collective term I coined for animation processes where the idealised smooth transitions between frames and continuous naturalistic movement are consciously discarded for expressive purposes. The term 'disrupted-image animation' includes interrupted filming techniques such as time-lapse photography and pixilation and moving-image techniques using non-sequential photography and still imagery as source material. Kinestasis and flickerfilm as processes are applicable here, favouring a collage aesthetic and an intertextual orientation with imagery intended to retain multiple meanings and intertextual references. Eisenstein's use of montage[2] references here with rapid juxtaposition of images to create associations and meaning. In disrupted-image animation the filmmaker does not work with laboriously created sequences of smooth naturalistic movement, but often with individual still images, photographs or short animated sequences created with the intention of being cut-up, repeated or looped, inverted or otherwise technically manipulated and re-contextualised.

Three films are examined in which disruptive techniques are used as narrative strategy, as they relate to my own use of such techniques, namely *While Darwin Sleeps* (2004) by Paul Bush (United Kingdom); *Election Abstract* (2017) by Cornelia Parker (United Kingdom); and *9 Ways to Draw a Person* (2017) by Sasha Svirsky (Russia). My film *Parys suite* is examined in more detail for its use of disrupted image techniques and editing as narrative strategy.

---

[2] Montage is a process of shot editing using Eisenstein's rule that the relation between two shots produces a third meaning, exterior to the mise-en-scène. Meanings of the montage shots are also controlled by the rhythm and the duration of the intercut shots (Colman 2011:215).

It must be mentioned here that the production processes and structure of *Parys suite* are discussed in detail in Chapter 6 from the point of view of the praxis, in an attempt to reveal the cognitive processes at work during intuitive and creative actions. While Chapter 5 represents the theory and explicit knowledge preceding the production of the film, Chapter 6 will attempt to unveil the tacit processes at work in hindsight by analysing the decisions made in the creative process, the reasoning behind such decisions and the manner of execution.

5.1 Editing in film

Editing is one of the production processes in which the distinction between live action and animated film is the most pronounced. Because live action is filmed in real time, excessive footage can be shot and edited down to the required form in post-production. Editing can succinctly be defined as "the process of selecting, assembling, and arranging motion picture shots and corresponding soundtracks in coherent sequence and flowing continuity" (Katz in Fischer 1999:64). Experimental filmmaker Maya Deren regarded editing as one of the primary devices of signification available to the film artist: “in film, the image … should be only … the basic material of the creative action …. The editing of a film creates the sequential relationship which gives particular or new meaning to the images” (Deren in Fischer 1999:68). In animation, footage is built frame by frame so in reference to Deren’s above-mentioned quote, even the “the basic material of the creative action” has to be painstakingly structured. Excessive footage is to be avoided at all cost, and the larger part of the editing process is often transferred from post-production to pre-production.

Another theoretical distinction between live-action film and animation, articulated through editing, is the impossibility of realism. While Rudolf Arnheim (1957) regards the artwork’s difference from reality as a way in which an art form can valorise and justify itself, other early film theorists such as André Bazin (1967:23–28) argue in favour of cinema’s ability to capture the material world. For Arnheim (1957:26–28) the editing process is one of abstraction, precisely distinguishing film from reality through montage, which has a conceptual and poetic connection to reality. On the other hand, Bazin only finds editing useful to the extent that it supports the film medium’s pull towards realism, and favours invisible or chronological editing. Bazin even refers to the cinema of editing as cheating, as it ascribes "meaning not proper to the images themselves but derived exclusively from their juxtaposition" (Bazin in Fischer 1999:66). Animation embraced

such ‘cheating’ from its outset, retaining the German word *trickfilm* as a term for animated cartoon. One of the most popular genres of early cinema, “the trickfilm genre was defined not only by its use of effects, but also by its magical or mysterious affect. Trickfilms were understood as creating a mystifying wonder about what one had just seen”(Solomon 2006:609). The production of trickfilms employed many cinematic techniques that would later come to be associated with cinematic special effects and animation, such as stop frame photography, dissolves, matte shots, multiple exposures, and reverse motion. These techniques are demystified in disrupted-image animation, and mined for the metaphoric meanings inherent in their processes.

Disrupted-image animation could be seen to present the very antithesis of Siegfried Krakauer and Bazin’s view of cinema and presents a constant flow of juxtapositions with editing often applied after every single frame. By virtue of its technical process of construction, if not necessarily by its abstraction of form, disrupted-image animation can be said to be on the opposite end to realism on Furniss’ continuum of motion picture image types (Furniss 2007:5,6). As discussed in section2.2.1, Furniss suggests classifying animated tropes on a continuum using ‘mimesis’ and ‘abstraction’ as the opposing tendencies.

Narrative is not action driven in the animated lyrical poetry-film. Furthermore, the narrative is not situated in the real world or even a conceptually fabricated space that must be acknowledged and legitimised through continuity in editing. The narrative is contained within the frame and does not continue or exist beyond it. Lyrical poetry-film is almost by default a time-image.

5.1.1 The time-image

Gilles Deleuze (1985) distinguishes between two basic image types in cinema, namely the movement image and the time-image. The movement image relates to conventional narrative where the narrative is driven by action – it is a subject-driven image wherein movements are linked in patterns of action and reaction (Poell 2004:19). The time-image does not present an action-driven narrative told through a sequencing of events or scenes: “Instead, [the narrative] can be found in the image itself, which must be read”. For Deleuze, the focus of filmmaking shifted from the “linking of images to the creation of intellectually or spiritually stimulating images” (Poell 2004:19) requiring a radically altered approach to how a film is put together. The paradigm case for Deleuze’s concept

of the time-image is the irrational cut (Mullarkey 2010). The 'irrational cut' refers to editing styles in which the continuity style of editing[3] is disrupted: "the cut now exists for itself, no longer for what it conjoins, but for its own disjunctive value" (Mullarkey 2010:182). When taking a kinestatic approach, a cinematic series of unrelated images can be regarded as consisting of irrational cuts after every single frame, so that editing becomes more than a process for structuring a narrative. Editing becomes a process of constructing meaning and signification similar to the act of writing. The filmmaker works with singular images, constructing visual lexemes frame by frame as a writer would construct words.

Tom Gunning (2014) points out that Deleuze never paid much attention to animation or to early cinema, and that he can be seen to devalue the mechanical production of motion. Deleuze's concern was not with establishing a theory of cinematic motion: His concepts of 'movement image' and 'time-image' do not relate to the creation or appearance of motion within cinema (animated or otherwise), but rather to the shot – the unit of film theory and practice that communicates a concept within the narrative: "Through the movement image, the shot mediates between its roles as a closed set of elements within a frame and its transformations related to a Whole" (Gunning 2014:2). Deleuze differentiates the movement image from the production of motion, referring to a primitive state of the cinema where "the image is in movement rather than being a movement image"(Deleuze in Gunning 2014:3). This differentiation might explain Deleuze's indifference towards animation, as the medium is by definition 'images in movement' while also being 'time-images' due to its particular relationship with time. Colman (2011) views Deleuze's philosophical orientation in his discussion of the time-image as focussed on the formal elements of the craft rather than the narration of content. The time-image accounts for the methodology of filmmaking techniques and practices by focussing on the perception of forms and the description of reality (Colman 2011:14). For Deleuze, the cinematic image is not singular, but comprises an 'infinite set': "a screen-based or filmic idea is never complete; there may be another version …

---

[3] Colman (2011: 212) defines continuity editing as "a technique of classical cinema to edit together sequences that unfold in logical order according to the narrative".

there may be alternative formats…. The image is always in the process of determining its ensemble" (Colman 2011:16).

5.1.2 Vertical editing

I return to the brief definition of editing offered in section 5.1 to circumscribe the process of editing used in *Parys suite*: "the process of selecting, assembling, and arranging motion picture shots and corresponding soundtracks in coherent sequence and flowing continuity" (Katz in Fischer 1999:64). The aspects of the definition that must be expanded are the notion of "arranging motion picture shots into a coherent sequence". This definition of conventional editing presupposes the existence of 'shots' – individual fully realised bits of moving image lined up sequentially.

In *Parys suite,* apart from conventional non-linear digital video editing, processes of 'vertical editing' are used (my terminology). Akin to compositing,[4] vertical editing entails the layering of shots and video-clips of varying shapes, sizes, and duration into the editing timeline. A film is constructed by the sequential positioning of shots and by layering visual elements from a database over a constant base clip. These visual elements can consist of short animated clips, still imagery, and text elements that are manipulated to move across the screen or go through various transitions. Transitions can be applied from editing to cinematographic processes that complicate standard concepts of framing. Furniss (2008:47) ascribes this development in framing to the influence of the internet and credits using such devices with the possibility of depicting multiple perspectives, parallel actions and other "story-deepening elements" (Furniss 2008).

To return to my analogy to the act of writing, the constant base clip of vertical editing, could be viewed as functioning similar to a 'paragraph' containing a series, range of ideas, or visual lexemes that convey meaning through their appearance, movement, duration, or plasmaticness (video link: https://youtu.be/xK07QwdhrxQ). The base clip could for example be a visual image with a duration of 10 seconds over which individual

---

[4] Riekeles and Lamarre (2012:175) describe the term 'compositing' as "commonly used to describe the process of establishing of relations between image layers. Much of our experience of movement in animation comes from compositing, and a variety of artists contribute to the mobile relations established between layers of the image" (Riekeles & Lamarre 2012:175).

moving images and animated sequences are layered – in functions of interacting and/or juxtaposition.

5.1.3 Editing in experimental animation

Katz's (Fischer 1999:64) definition of editing begs intervention from the point of view of (experimental) praxis. His definition makes assumptions for a film, such as coherency and flow continuity as pre-requisites, or desired outcomes. However, the work of Sasha Svirsky defies flowing continuity in terms of its visual approach and skirts coherency in terms of literary or conceptual content. Deren's (Fischer 1999:68) view of editing as a means of creating sequential relationships between images and ideas, opening them up to particular or new meaning is a more useful and open-ended term to circumscribe the process in terms of experimental animation and poetry-film.

In animated poetry-film, cinematic signification functions alongside language, at times in unison, and at times in contrast or juxtaposition. The editing process is a device by which literary and cinematic languages are combined to structure a unified message. Lim (2007:197) refers to systemic functional linguistics[5] as a general theory of meaning in the analysis of multimodality which, without drawing comparisons with language, aims to demonstrate the general principles by which a non-language semiotic resource, like cinematic images, operate. Systemic functional linguistics has effective communication as its aim, rather than correct linguistic structures and forms. Experimental animation often consciously discards conventional structures and forms for the sake of effective communication, and therefore systemic functional linguistics is an apt approach to use.

Following the systemic functionalist perception of language as a social semiotic system– "that is to say, a system in which its meaning and form are always driven by its context and speaker's communicative goals" (Endarto 2017: 3) the importance of editing as the means of ordering the language of animation emerges. Through editing imagery are placed into context, and contexts are created through the combination, juxtaposition and layering of imagery and text. Context is pivotal in communication as texts are

---

[5] Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is a theory of language centred around the notion of language function. While SFL accounts for the syntactic structure of language, it places the function of language as central (what language does, and how it does it), in preference to more structural approaches that place the elements of language and their combinations as central ("What is systemic-functional linguistics?" [Sa]).

produced in and influenced by contexts, and are read or viewed within a particular context. Endarto (2017:4) focuses on the view of "language as a system of systems with the meaning potential", where meaning is constructed by choosing from a range of alternatives. This essential notion of choice is meaningful in terms of the perception of editing as an instance of systemic functional linguistics. A film could be analysed by showing "the functional organisation of its structure … and … what meaningful choices have been made, each one seen in the context of what might have been meant but was not" (Halliday & Matthiessen in Endarto 2017:4)

How editing communicates, has to be analysed both from the point of view of the filmmaker and that of the spectator. In conventional narrative the spectator does not acknowledge the editing process in terms of its technical functions (recognising the addition of shots as they occur), and instead recognises the addition of information in an ongoing story. While from the filmmaker's point of view editing regards discrete physical events of cutting and joining scenes, the viewer has to "incorporate these new facts into a coherent framework with the earlier information that the film supplies. This task is not analogous to reading. Rather, the task engages the viewer's inductive capacities" (Carroll 1996:404).

In the process of editing, the intervention of the filmmaker is only a partial representation, and the viewer is required to fill in the gaps.

5.2 Sound

Chion (1994) uses the term 'added value' when referring to the relationship between sound and image in film. "By added value I mean the expressive and informative value with which a sound enriches a given image so as to create the definite impression, in the immediate or remembered experience one has of it, that this information or expression 'naturally' comes from what is seen, and is already contained in the image itself" (Chion 1994:5). In animated film, all relationships between what is seen and what is heard is artificial, as the 'seen' is fabricated and the 'heard' artificially assigned to the seen. This artificial relationship between what is seen and heard allows animation the unique opportunity to create novel image/sound relationships – an opportunity enthusiastically explored in cartoon animation especially.

The value of sound/image synchronism (synchresis) in film is that sound affords visual instances consistency and materiality (and thus believability). This value of sound is generally true for film and particularly true for animation. Sound influences perception "through the phenomenon of added value, it interprets the meaning of the image, and makes us see in the image what we would not otherwise see, or would see differently" (Chion 1994:34).

Chion (1994:25–29) identifies three modes of listening that contribute to meaning making:

- Causal listening aims to gather information about the cause, or the source of the sound.
- Semantic listening refers to using an existing code or a language to interpret a message. Semantic listening is the most direct, but also the most complex way of deciphering meaning.
- Reduced listening is a listening mode that focuses on the traits of the sound itself, independent of its cause and meaning.

The causal and semantic modes can be employed simultaneously. The content of spoken text and how it is spoken contribute to the meaning of it, and both are significant factors to take into consideration when constructing the voice-track for a poetry-film.

Due to the artificiality of the created universe of any animated film, animation presents special challenges as a medium for sound designers and musicians. Within the imagined world the sound designer has to match music and sound to contrived motion, characters, and settings, as no location sound is readily available by contrast to live-action filmmaking. Animation requires the creation of an entirely contained and convincing audio-visual world. Coyle et al. (2013:44) argue that animated film requires more music and sound than real-time footage as music provides continuity, and aids in identifying and defining objects and characters, "giving them scale, scope, and specific profiles through their sonic dimensions".

Deutsch (2007) proposes a definition for the term 'soundtrack': "intentional sound which accompanies moving images in narrative film. This intentionality does not exclude sounds which are captured accidentally … rather it suggests that any such sounds, however recorded, are deliberately presented with images by filmmakers" (Deutsch 2007:3). The elements of the soundtrack can be differentiated into two categories,

namely literal sounds (to add believability to the images on screen) and emotive sounds (to add feeling to what is seen). Especially as far as animation is concerned, an important aspect of literal sound is its role in convincing the viewer of the credibility of the film's world: "Sounds which are synchronous with movement and audience's expectation of congruence with image help us to enter the 'reality' of the narrative"(Deutsch 2007:4). The role of emotive sound is to present the viewer with "visceral filters of varying density"(Deutsch 2007:4) by manipulating meaning in a film through the manipulation of the viewer's feelings about what he sees.

The eye and the ear perceive differently due to the specific routes followed in processing information: "The eye perceives more slowly because it has more to do all at once; it must explore in space as well as follow along in time. The ear isolates a detail of its auditory field, and it follows this point or line in time … So, overall, in a first contact with an audio-visual message, the eye is more spatially adept, and the ear more temporally adept" (Chion 1994:11). That is how sound superimposed on image can direct the viewer's attention and can influence the perception of time in an image, in a sense animating it when no movement is physically depicted. Chion (1994:14, 15) refers to the temporalisation of images to explain how the soundtrack can influence the perception of the cinematic visual image, thus altering or manipulating its meaning as read by the audience.

Beauchamp (2005:18) lists a multitude of functions of the well-designed soundtrack as narrative device, from the influencing of time and spatial perception to the advancing of the narrative and character development. In a lyrical poetry-film, these specifically narrative functions of sound might be superfluous, and sound could be regarded as having a more metaphorical function, often used in contrast or juxtaposition to visual imagery. Sound in the poetry-film is often not used to advance the narrative content of the visual material, but rather for its own value. Deutsch (2007) identifies four types of sound that generally comprise a soundtrack, namely 'words' (synchronised speech and voiceover), 'music' (emotional signification) 'atmospheric sound effects implicating reality' (diegetic sound), and 'heightened sound effects' (bridging thinking and feeling).

Chion (1994:63) coins the term 'syncresis' by combining 'synchronism' with 'synthesis' to refer to "the spontaneous and irresistible weld produced between a particular auditory phenomenon and visual phenomenon when they occur at the same time"

(Chion 1994:63). Syncresis is what makes post-production sound design possible, allowing the filmmaker to assign sound to visual occurrences. Chion claims a lack of any rational logic in this joining of visual imagery and sound in the mind and does admit that it is not totally automatic. Certain audio and visual combinations will come together, and others will not, depending on the extent to which the mind is willing to accept the diegetic connection between sight and sound. For poetry-film to exist as an intermedial medium of expression, syncresis is essential. Without the weld between sound (text) and visual image the symbiosis between poem and film is not possible. The four types of sound, and how they are used in the poetry-film will be explored to determine how (and if) syncresis is achieved.

5.2.1 Words

Sound in film is primarily vococentric, highlighting the human voice and setting it apart from other sounds when present. Voice is the medium of expression that requires effortless intelligibility, because in a sound environment if a human voice is heard, the viewer will first attempt to understand it before attempting to decipher other sound clues. Sound is also verbocentric. Words add value to the image by structuring vision – it acts as a framing device in terms of the imagery visible on screen. Unlike with static imagery like photographs or paintings, film is fleeting, allowing the viewer limited time to observe and comprehend (Chion 1994:6). In poetry-film, this relationship between imagery and words could even become inverted, as the verbocentrism of the soundtrack is heightened, the visual imagery functions as a framing device that provides added value to the words. The importance of the words, the poem, as structural and structuring element is a distinguishing characteristic of the poetry-film as a medium.

5.2.2 Voice

Beauchamp (2005:31) describes narration as a cinematic version of oral storytelling, using invisible storytellers to deliver important story points. The use of voice in a poetry-film is rather specific and usually limited to voiceover narration of the poetry text. Voiceover entails non-synchronised speech. The narrator represents the voice of the poet, delivering the entire content of the narrative. The speaker is unseen and the

narration directed exclusively at the audience.[6] Stefanie Orphal (2015) points out that due to the necessity of voiceover narration, the poem is not part of the diegetic world of the poetry-film and there tends to be a separation between what is heard and what is seen, "creating counterpoint and contrast" (Orphal 2015).

Therefore, Orphal regards syncresis, the cross-modal association between events that are seen and heard simultaneously, as crucial to the experience of poems in an audio-visual context. Without syncresis occurring, the poem and the film will not meld. This failure to meld often happens in poetry-film when there is no corresponding structure between the poem and the audio-visual material paired with it. The narration of the poem remains a voice performance merely layered upon visual material, which often is layered onto a piece of music.

Narrated text as auditory phenomenon is not a natural occurrence in the sense that it will affect a "spontaneous and irresistible weld" with any visual phenomenon occurring at the same time just because it is presented to the viewer simultaneously.[7] Syncresis happens more readily between visual material and sound effects where there are similarities in essence – a kind of synesthesia. Language generally lacks this synesthetic connection with visual material, unless the voice work acquires some added value through additional auditive attributes. In voiceover this can be achieved using performativity – the selection, and performance of the voice artist can add to the syncresis between visuals and auditive track.

The voice track in the poetry-film has three aspects to it, namely text, vocal performance, and positioning of text within the duration of the film:

- Text: Communication of the direct content of the poem.
- Vocal performance: Addition of meaning in varying degrees depending on the role of the performance. The performance could simply be delivering the content of the text in which the added meaning will amount to the quality of the voice work, the

---

6 Dialogue is usually a major narrative element in conventional narrative structures, and with voiceovers is mostly absent.

7 Unless the visual phenomenon happens to be synchronised footage of a voice performer performing the auditory phenomenon.

timing and the effectivity of delivery. The role of the performance could also be to create a character, giving the delivery of the text a conversational aspect.

In *Hate for sale* (Eijsbouts 2017), (video-link: https://vimeo.com/215445656) a poetry-film by Dutch animator Anna Eijsbouts (Holland) of a poem by Neil Gaiman, the artist created a character to deliver the voice-over poem:

> To me the narrator of a poem was always a person, but never Neil. So, it felt like he was speaking through a character he'd invented, somehow …. He was certainly a man, androgynous, but always a man in my eyes, and given the state of the world and why we are where we are, I stand by that choice. And then he needed to seduce with this message. Also, this way I could place the hate in her [sic] visible, I could show – not literally, but still – what it does to a person, with a person, how it makes certain choices easy until harshly confronted with the consequences. Much like we all were when we saw the body of Aylan Kurdi washed up on the shore (Eijsbouts 2020).

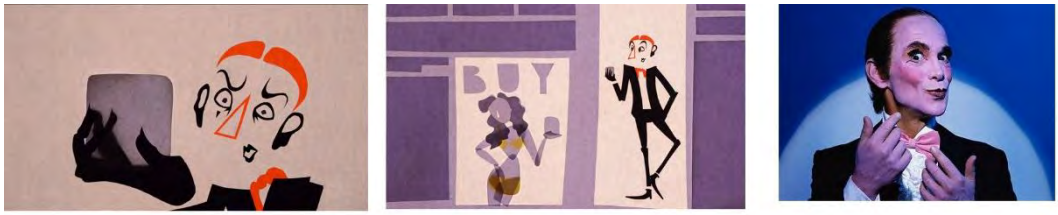


Figure 15. The narrator in *Hate For Sale* (Eisbouts 2016) was based to a large extent on the master of ceremonies character in *Cabaret* (Fosse 1972).

Eijsbouts was very specific about the character's vocal performance. The character itself is depicted in the film and Eijsbouts indicates several specific references in her creation of the character, namely Loki from Norse Mythology, David Bowie's performance as the goblin king in *Labyrinth* (Henson 1986), and especially the master of ceremonies played by Joel Grey in *Cabaret* (Fosse 1972). The voice work in Eijsbouts' film strongly references the character in *Cabaret* (Figure 15), while the poem itself echoes the song *Black Market* (Dietrich 1949) by Marlene Dietrich. Apart from its implications for the meaning of the film, these multiple references stimulate the achievement of syncresis. The visual aspect of the film is aligned with the literal content of the voiceover narration by the performative aspect of the voice work.

In *Parys suite,* Movement 1: Piaf, the voice artist was also chosen for the specific quality of her voice, intending for her voice to be evocative of Edith Piaf's voice. In *Parys suite*, Movement 5: nagwaak, the voice work was altered using a digital filter to add meaning external to the propositional content of the text. The sound of the voice

adds an element of the public protests that are only marginally present in the visual material.

- Positioning of spoken phrases within the timeline of the film: Intersection of visual narration and audio narration. The poem is not delivered in a unified stream or block as it is presented in printed form on a page. Depending on the visual content engendered by the text, the poem may be 'fractured' by disrupting its conventional temporal course, in the sense of dislocating phrases that allow the visual content to play out. At the end of *Parys suite* Movement 5: nagwaak, the last line of the poem is interrupted for 20 seconds to allow for a barrage of visual imagery. This interruption has a very specific influence on the understanding of the poem, which is discussed in more detail in 6.3.6.4.

5.2.3 Music

Chion (1994:8) distinguishes between empathetic music and anempathetic music as ways that music enhances emotion in relation to visual imagery in film. Empathetic music directly participates in the feeling of the scene by adopting its rhythm, tone, and phrasing. Such music is bound to cultural codes for specific emotions like sadness, happiness, or moods like tranquillity or excitement. Anempathetic music is conspicuously indifferent to the situation depicted in the visual imagery. "This juxtaposition of scene with indifferent music has the effect not of freezing emotion but rather of intensifying it, by inscribing it on a cosmic background"(Chion 1994:8).

Deutsch (2007) divides the role of music in a soundtrack into three sections:

- Image integration: How music integrates with the imagery, and involves the elements of diegesis and synchronicity. Diegetic music would refer to music performed within the imagined world, and can be heard by the onscreen characters. On the other hand, non-diegetic music is "analogous to the camerawork and editing, part of the fabric of the film, and like cinematography, only rarely meant to intrude through the membrane of the narrative" (Deutsch 2007:9). Non-diegetic music is for the benefit of the audience only, and therefore is a dedicated narrative device. In the lyrical poetry-film music will be non-diegetic, as the film makes sparse use of character or storyline and consists of a one-sided dialogue between the narrator (poet) and the listener (the audience). As far as musical synchronicity is concerned, the extent to which music can mimic action is dependent on the scope of the foley track of the film. The more 'real' sounds are used corresponding to visual images, the less music is required (Deutsch 2007).

- Effect: How music influences the viewer's reading of the film. Deutsch (2007:7) proposes that music is used universally to provide context for social events, and this cultural tradition has been transposed to cinema. The audience has grown to accept that the music in a film tells what things signify. Further, music can be used to reference cultural, historical, and geographical elements through using instrumentation and style. In this regard Deutsch (2007:7) refers to the musical cliché, which is consciously used in *Parys suite*. Musical cliché is used 'undiluted' in Movement 3: Amon L'isa in which the Infernal Galop from Act II, Scene 2 of Offenbach's 1858 operetta *Orpheus in the Underworld* denotes a connotation between the contemplation of the *Mona Lisa* by tourists and that of the lascivious patrons of burlesque cabarets of Paris of the last century (video link: https://youtu.be/grRyupHbXx8). The undiluted use of musical cliché is a device that functions outside the direct structure of the music itself, "to infer concepts and issues outside of the film's diegesis" (Deutsch 2007:11). Diegesis is most readily achieved using existing music composed for another purpose and within a specific context, which adds value to the film's meaning. With "dilution" Deutsch (2007:7) refers to the extent of alteration made to the original cliché. In Movement 3: Amon L'isa, Nat King Cole's famous song *Mona Lisa* is used. The song can be regarded as a 'second-level cliché', as the song is played on piano and only fragments of it are used. The more variation is added to the original music, the more the cliché disintegrates. Fragments of an Edith Piaf song are similarly used in the first movement. In both cases, an element of cliché is fundamental for the structure and the meaning of the poetry-film and to dilute the cliché to the point of disintegration would destroy the intertextual reference. Deutsch (2007:7) advises the composer to start with the cliché and through dilution proceed to "find the point which retains geographical reference without calling undue attention to the crude overuse of the gesture".
- Devices: The musical material and how it is applied on a technical level (Deutsch 2007:8). Tonality, timbre and rhythm are inherently musical devices of enormous technical and theoretical scope, which falls outside the focus of this study.

5.2.4 Sound effects

Due to the fabricated nature of the visual phenomena in animated film, syncresis is essential in creating credibility. In *While Darwin Sleeps* (2004) by Paul Bush,[8] the filmmaker uses a hum and bristle to accompany a visual sequence consisting of the pulsing metamorphosis of insects (Figures 22 and 23: video link: https://vimeo.com/36346472). This sound seems to represent the insects on a very primal level although completely unrelated to specific insects depicted (or any insects whatsoever). The artist assigns each class of insect a different hum, for example, the wasps sound more 'scratchy' and are suggestive of insects with prominent legs and antennae. Although there is no causal link between the sound and the visual phenomenon, syncresis happens because in the mind of the viewer the sound and image belong together.

In *Paris suite,* syncresis happens in Movement 5: nagwaak (video link: https://youtu.be/idwKd-wKYOo) among other examples. At the start of the movement a click is heard that sets the rotation of a reel on a movie-projector in motion. The reel can be heard spinning with a piece of film flapping. Although quite subliminal, this sound is a familiar sound for those who grew up with 9 mm film and home projectors. However, on screen a moth flutters into view, and although the viewer might have recognised the sound for what it was, a syncretic connection is made between the sound and the moth. The sound is used to represent the fluttering moth throughout the film. Apart from its function as representing the visual motif of the moth on screen, this sound also has various metaphorical significances. The sound references the medium of film as a carrier of content and meaning. As a sound occurring at the end of a film spool, it signifies a multitude of possibilities, such as that of a medium that has become obsolete and has been replaced, or of a never-ending cyclical movement. Both possibilities reflect on the process of public protest.

In lyrical animated poetry-film, an alternative universe is often not created with locations and characters that have to be rendered convincingly through sound effects and music. Sound and music are used to make a character or space convincing, and also to carry their own meaning. Sound and music fulfil the function of providing continuity

---

[8] The film is discussed in more detail in section5.3.3

and unifying the film, and often add content and even context to the text and contribute meaning to the script. The animated poetry-film is often a reaction to and representation of the 'real world', abstracted in its visual representation to a similar degree to which poetry abstracts the 'real world' through language. Lyrical poetry does not present us with a fictional realm, and instead describes the lived world and experiences of it through 'ungrammaticalities' (Riffaterre 1980) of language. The animated poetry-film does the same through the ungrammaticalities in its use and representation of sound taken from the 'real world'. The ungrammatical vocabulary is constructed through image-making processes that are deliberately different from naturalistic and fictive visual and aural representations.

5.3 Disrupted-image animation

Often referred to as the 'bible of animation', the 12 basic principles of animation[9] are generally regarded as the guiding principles in the production of realistic animated movement. The purpose of the principles is to teach the animator how to create the illusion that the animated universe adheres to the basic laws of physics. Smooth naturalistic movement is an important aim in the work of most conventional animation studios and regarded as a sign of quality craftsmanship. In a sense, there exists a curious desire to disguise that animated footage is generated frame by frame. Buchan (2020) refers to an 'impossibly real' aesthetic of the inherent ideology of the dominant digital industry, and how artists challenge that with intentional imperfection. She coins the term 'disruptive animation', referring to the manipulation of imperfections in the technological means of animation production. In digital technology this would refer to the 'scratch, datamosh, and glitch' that result from imperfections in the digital process of manufacturing and rendering. While working with the polished tools of perfection of the digital industry, the artist consciously introduces technical imperfections as a means of expression.

---

[9] As expressed in the principles of Disney animation by Thomas and Johnston (1994), namely squash and stretch, anticipation, staging, straight ahead action and pose-to-pose, follow through and overlapping action, ease-in – ease-out, arcs, secondary action, timing, exaggeration, solid drawing, and appeal.

Disrupted-image animation goes further and disrupts the ideology of 'hyperrealism' (Wells 1998:25) on a fundamental level by disrupting the conventional production process, changing frame rates, disrupting continuity, avoiding and even obliterating the illusion of smooth movement. Disrupted-image animation wants to show, often explicitly, that the animated film is made up of individual images, the production of which does not adhere to a smooth, logical timeline in the production process. However, when displayed, the audience perceives an uninterrupted flow of re-created time. According to Pikkov (2010; 49), "time in the animated film resembles a cubist painting, the image of which has been first divided into odd, manipulated pieces and then reassembled as a new totality". This characteristic of time in the animated film is made visible in disrupted-image animation because the illusion of an uninterrupted flow of time is shattered by the intentional lack of correspondence between sequential frames. The disturbance in the flow of the animated film effected by disrupted-image animation makes visible the labour usually obscured by cinematic motion.

Four categories of moving-image production form the basis of what I categorise as disrupted-image animation, namely time-lapse photography, pixilation,[10] flickerfilm, and kinestasis. The boundaries between these processes are porous and terminology is often used interchangeably by its practitioners. The aim of the animator in using these processes is to achieve of the illusion of movement and to create movement in which the relationship between object, movement, and time is revealed in various ways. The animator creates a visual vocabulary of movement types in which significance is affected by the object that moves, the movement itself, and how the movement was achieved and recorded.

5.3.1 Time-lapse photography/film

Time-lapse photography entails the recording of a real-time event filmed in an interrupted, but controlled and consistent manner. Instead of recording 24 frames per second, the time-lapse camera records much slower, taking single photographs at regular intervals, with time lapses between photographs that vary from a few seconds to hours or even days. The effect of time-lapse is that it seems to speed up time. When the

[10] Not to be confused with pixelation, which refers to the breaking up of a digital image into pixels, the smallest digital picture element.

recorded footage is screened, it is played back at 24 frames per second, and because it was not recorded with 24 frames, the action is sped up dramatically. A dictionary definition of the functioning of the technique explains it as “the technique of taking a sequence of photographs at set time intervals to record events that occur imperceptibly slowly, so that when the resulting film is played at normal speed the action is speeded up and perceptible” (OED 2010. Sv 'time-lapse').

Tom Gasek (2012:10) regards time-lapse photography as a form of stop-motion animation that is shot in a controlled and consistent manner. Time-lapse photography would be in the cross-over zone between live action and animation on Furniss’ continuum of motion picture image types. Often making use of ‘real-life’ locations, time-lapse photography also shares the recording apparatus with live-action motion pictures, albeit somewhat modified. However, what classifies time-lapse as animation is the interruption of the filming process, the creation of temporal (and thus, metaphysical) gaps between frames. Time-lapse photography allows us to see plants shoot up and grow right in front of our eyes, or a day passing within seconds. According to Kit Layborne (1998:72), time-lapse photography “alters our perceptions by collapsing time” and Gasek (2012) comments on the ability of time-lapse photography to change our perspective on time, possibly giving us a more expanded understanding of our world and ourselves.

Gone with the Wind (2009) by Ülo Pikkov (Estonia) documents the disappearance of an Estonian house (by demolition) over the course of a year (Figure 16). Pikkov regards *Gone with the Wind* as an animated film since it “sculpts and fragments time using editing. Therefore, it presents psychological time … The audience gets a sense of the flux of time and of the temporality of their own existence” (Pikkov 2010:55).

Figure 16. Ülo Pikkov, *Gone with the Wind* (2009). Animation, 1 minute 31 seconds. Video link: https://vimeo.com/15609709.

Unlike the usual instances of time-lapse footage, Pikkov operated the camera manually, which is evident in the uneven pacing of the sequences, using varying viewpoints on the building, and the 'shaky' camerawork from which it is clear that the camera was not positioned on a tripod to get a steady view. The viewer does get the impression of time sped up as they see a house demolished in minutes and all trace of it disappear over the real-time course of a year. Pikkov (2010:55) refers to his technique in *Gone with the Wind* as 'pixilation' – a technique usually associated with the animation of people as discussed in section 5.3.2, resulting in a very characteristic depiction of movement. His use of the term 'pixilation' illustrates the difficulty of clear categorisation, as the term makes sense if one considers the possibility of the artist animating himself as the viewer of the event that unfolds in the film. Pikkov's depiction is not of a human body – seen from outside – being animated. He shows the point of view of the body being animated, from the inside looking out.

In *Parys suite* time-lapse photography is used in the prelude and postlude of the film (two 60-second sections at the front and back of the film which contain the title sequence and the credits). In the prelude, the camera records an empty room with a few pieces of static furniture (Figure 17). Nothing happens or changes. The sequence is identified as a filmed sequence rather than a still image due to the slight alteration of the quality of light falling through the windows. This fluctuation in lighting is unnatural, making the viewer aware that the footage was not filmed in real time and that time has

been sped up. Elli Avram (2013:173) refers to a 'trompe le temps' effect – the presentation of an arrested moment without past or future. Temporality is used "in an illusionist manner: images present a story that doesn't exist, they rely on an absent temporality, although they suggest the presence of both story and temporality" (Avram 2013:173).

Figure 17. Diek Grobler, *Paris suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Screenshots from the prelude. Video link: https://youtu.be/Rnpq-zrws-M.

In the postlude, time-lapse photography is used in exactly the same manner, achieving a very different effect due to the context. Positioned on a platform at the Concorde station on the Paris Métro, the camera reveals a scene in which the condensing of time is very visible (Figure 18).

Figure 18. Diek Grobler, *Paris suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Screenshots from the postlude. Video link. https://youtu.be/PbG4JKpDd34.

The physical movement seen in the film does not advance a narrative, but rather depicts the cyclical nature of events through trains arriving, passengers getting on and off, trains leaving. The use of time-lapse photography rather than real-time footage accentuates this cycle of leaving and arriving. Speeding up time makes the metaphor more urgent, more visible.

Both the prelude and the postlude are Deleuzian time-images. They do not contain narratives that are advanced by movement, or by duration. Rather their narratives are told through the cyclical nature of the imagery, and the technical method of producing it. The prelude and postlude are both portraits of timelessness.

5.3.2 Pixilation

The term 'pixilation' is attributed to Canadian animator Grant Munro, a contemporary of McLaren at the National Film Board of Canada. Both artists contributed to the development of the technique in which a human being is animated like a puppet or model, its natural movements incrementally divided, carefully manipulated, and filmed. Wells (2002) defines 'pixilation' as "the frame-by-frame recording of deliberately staged live-action movement to create the illusion of movement impossible to achieve by naturalistic means, for example, figures spinning in mid-air" (Wells, 2002:136) (Figure 19).

Figure 19. Norman McLaren, *Neighbours* (1952). Animation, 8 minutes 7 seconds. A still image showing the characters 'hovering' mid-air, an impossible movement and could only be achieved with pixilation. The actors jumping on cue and were photographed in mid-air for a succession of frames. Video link: https://www.nfb.ca/playlists/mclaren/playback/#1.

Although descriptive of the process, this definition relies too heavily on the kind of movement depicted (that which is "impossible to achieve by naturalistic means"), because with the development of CGI, the depiction of almost every conceivable movement is practically achievable. Furniss (2007:161) acknowledges the stylised nature of movement characteristic of pixilation and its expressive qualities. She quotes McLaren (Furniss 2007:161):

> In much the same way as a pictorial caricature can make comment on character and situation by distorting the static form of a drawing, so live-action-animation can create a caricature by tampering with the tempo of human action, by creating hyper-natural exaggerations and distortions of the normal behaviour, by manipulating the acceleration and deceleration of any given human movement (McLaren in Furniss 2007:161).

Layborne (1998:78) gives a technical explication of the technique from which two main characteristics emerge. Firstly, pixilation is ruled by trial and error, and secondly the

filmed material that results from this technique possesses inherent humour. This humour flows from a very characteristic disjointed manner of movement to a large extent. The humour results from the characters (the human puppets) disrupting their own natural movement for the filming process. The technique requires the animator to work with actors as if they are puppets to be animated, and not to expect them to give character interpretation. Laura Ivins-Hulley (2013) points out that this approach results in a performance "focussed on selective, external physical expressions rather than internal psychology" (Ivins-Hulley 2013:268). The actors are objectified and used by the director to express ideas rather than character or personality.

The inherent humour in the movement displayed in a film is a result of the disruption of movement when capturing the 'footage'. The characteristic appearance of pixilated movement could be one of the reasons for the leniency in using imprecise terminology when referring to related image-capture processes that produce a similarity of movement. Pikkov refers to his technique in *Gone with the Wind* as 'pixilation' when technically speaking 'time-lapse photography' might be more apt. Similarly, filmmaker Paul Bush[11] (United Kingdom) refers to the technique used in his films as pixilation while flickerfilm or kinestasis[12] might be more accurate, technically speaking. These techniques are not clearly delineated, and such delineation may be impossible or undesirable. As with the attempt to define animation, it might be more useful to position each on its own spectrum with a clear definition only circumscribing the very centre of such a spectrum.

Pixilation is used sparsely and indirectly in *Parys suite.* In Movement 1: Piaf, I used pixilation as a method to create reference material for the hand-drawn animation. The reference material for the movement of the sparrows was filmed by hand in quick succession, rather than using real-time footage to rotoscope the movement of the sparrows.[13] Redrawing the pixilated footage gives the resulting animation a jerky quality that is typical of pixilation (Figure 20).

---

11 Paul Bush's film *While Darwin Sleeps* is discussed in section 5.3.3.

12 Pixilation and kinestasis are related only in some applications of the latter, as explained in section 5.3.3.

13 Like Pikkov who pixilated in the camera rather than the subject matter, as discussed in the previous section.

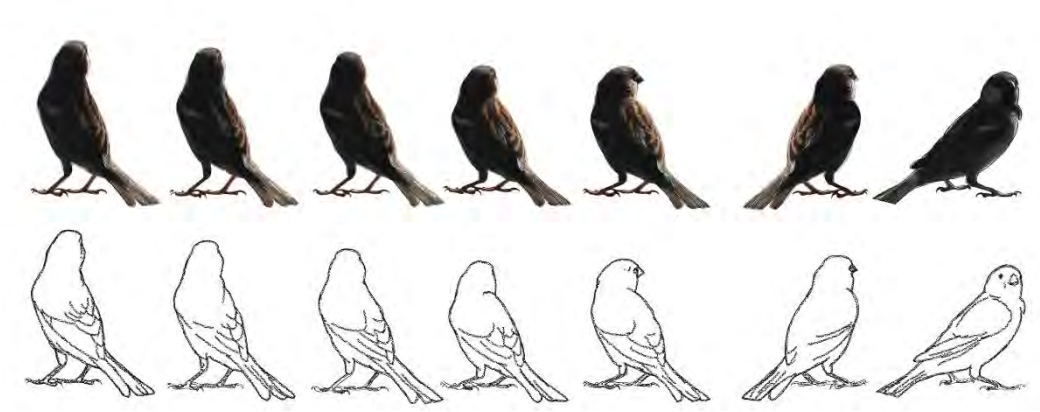


Figure 20. The use of a pixilation approach to drawn animation: the photos of the sparrow's movement was filmed manually, and then used as reference for the drawings.

A second instance of pixilation occurs in Movement 3: Amon L'isa in two crowd scenes. Again, this is a case of 'indirect' pixilation. The crowd of people (subject matter) was not directed to perform for the camera. Rather, the filmmaker photographed the scenes by hand as the crowd went through their intuitive motions. The resulting footage displays stylised jerky motion associated with pixilation, but could, theoretically, also have been achieved with time-lapse photography. The physical presence of the photographer as he captures the photographs distinguishes the sequence from time-lapse photography. His presence adds a performative quality that would have been lacking in time-lapse photography. Individual members of the crowd acknowledge the presence of the filmmaker. The best example is the young woman (Figure 21), who stares directly and somewhat self-consciously at the filmmaker/viewer while waiting for her turn to take photos with a shared camera.

Figure 21. Diek Grobler, *Paris suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Pixilation crowd scene (detail) from Movement 3: Amon L'isa. Video link: https://youtu.be/rhZOXsEk4KE.

The crowd is conscious of a filmmaker photographing them photographing a painting, which would most probably not have been the case had the camera been positioned on

a tripod. As in Pikov's film *Gone with the Wind*, the cameraman is animated, and the camera's point of view is pixelated.

The use of pixilation in both instances relates to the specific nature of movement required. In Movement 1: Piaf, the movement achieved is an important part of articulating the character of the sparrows. In Movement 3: Amon L'isa the purpose of using pixilation was to use the inherent comedy in pixilated movement to characterise the crowd of people in relation to the text of the poem and the lampooning approach of the film.

5.3.3 Flickerfilm

The term 'flickerfilm' originated with a film *The Flicker* (1966) by Tony Conrad (United States), a film that lasts 30 minutes and consists only of black and white frames alternating in a planned pattern. The technique has since been used by experimental filmmakers like Paul Sharits (United States) in *T,O,U,C,H,I,N,G* (1968) and is still used by contemporary artists working in film, like Cornelia Parker (United Kingdom) in *Election Abstract* (2017) and Jane Glennie (United States)in *447: Intellect - N* . Flickerfilm "consists not of moving-image footage, but of a series of still images presented at 24 or 25 frames per second. It could be described as an extremely rapid slide show" (Glennie 2019:19). Of course, live cinema film and more conventional approaches to animation are projected at the same rate with the intention of creating smooth movement, whereas "flickerfilm disrupts the seamless (movement) with disparate frames" (Glennie 2019:[sp]). Hannah Frank (2019:24) indicates that using flicker sequences was already in experimental use in the 1920s in animated cartoons like Otto Messmer's *Felix the Cat* series, and early Disney *Silly Symphonies*.[14] These sequences had a narrative purpose and already deliberately undermined the fluidity of the animation (Frank 2019:24).

Glennie regards the flickerfilm technique as well-suited for videopoetry as it can have "an instant visual impact in a short length and can capture attention in the brief, ephemeral encounters of social media" (Glennie 2019:19). She has reservations about

---

[14] Hannah Frank (2019) cites Wilfred Jackson's *The Busy Beavers* (Disney, 1931) in which black and white frames are alternated to suggest the effect of lightning in a rainstorm, and William Hanna and Joseph Barbera's *The Night before Christmas* (MGM, 1941) as visual effect to depict an electrocution, among others.

the length of flickerfilm a viewer can face. The bombardment of imagery could be too intense to use in a very long text and suggests a 1-minute flickerfilm at 25 frames per second. The viewer will be exposed to 1500 individual, often unrelated, photographs in the minute.

Glennie thinks that the individual images of a flickerfilm can be likened to a grapheme or a letter in written text, sequences of which can be built into visual words or phrases. This is possible if one compares the viewing of a film to the action of reading text, where the confident reader reads sections of words and phrases rather than individual letters. Similarly, in a flickerfilm with the rapidly flickering individual images "individual images may be registered but it is the larger units of sequences of images that are digested. Sequences of images can have their own rhythm and can pulse at different rates while passing at 25 frames per second in the same way that a writer gives language a rhythm but the typesetter gives each letter visually even spacing" (Glennie 2019:19). Glennie refers to *Film as Art* (1957) in which Arnheim doubts whether a montage of visual images intended to express an idea can acquire visual unity. Arnheim (1957:90) argues that in poetry disconnected themes can be joined because the mental images attached to words are vaguer and more abstract than actual visual images. Therefore, the words will more readily cohere to represent symbolic moments or ideas than visual imagery. Glennie proposes that the speed of a flickerfilm makes its images vaguer and more abstract, giving them some of the attributes of written language. This property might allow the flickerfilm to achieve a fusion of meaning between text and image which is the aim poetry-film (Glennie 2019:21).

While Darwin Sleeps (2004) by Paul Bush (United Kingdom) is a clear example of a very refined application of both kinestasis and flickerfilm. Bush uses flickerfilm in a very structured way, in an almost-similar manner as a stop-frame animation when using replacement parts or objects. Inspired by the insect collection of Walter Linsenmaier in the Lucerne Nature Museum, the film uses 3 500 of the museum's collection of 28 000 insects. The film starts with a black screen on which two frames of information regarding the insect population of the earth, and the insect inventory of the museum appear, followed by the film's title. Ambient sounds fade in of visitors to a museum, the rather dry voice of an elderly English man shares information about insects, while images of various insects in display cases appear on screen (Figures 22 and 23).

Figure 22. Paul Bush, *While Darwin Sleeps* (2004). Animation, 5 minutes 3 seconds. Stills from the beginning of the film that last 2 seconds on screen, and the images are quite distinct from each other in composition and scale. Video link: https://vimeo.com/36346472.

Figure 23. Paul Bush, *While Darwin Sleeps* (2004). Animation, 5 minutes 3 seconds. As the film progresses the duration of individual images diminishes, in this case to 1 second, and the compositions become less diverse. Video link: https://vimeo.com/36346472.

The pace of the single still photographs increases steadily until it reaches a speed of a single frame per image (24 frames per second). The insects transform by virtue of their replacement – frame by frame – with another insect of similar size and appearance. Bush creates a rhythmic pulsing of insects continuously growing and shrinking. By keeping the size and position(s) of the insects on the screen more or less constant, Bush causes the viewers to feel as if they are witnessing a single species evolving continuously (Figure 24).

Figure 24. Paul Bush, *While Darwin Sleeps* (2004). Animation, 5 minutes 3 seconds. Images gradually speed up until an image rate of 24 images is reached. The composition of frames has become uniform and gives the viewers the impression that they are watching a single insect transform. Video link: https://vimeo.com/36346472.

In a video interview, Bush himself refers to the technique used here as pixilation – the technique of making real objects (usually human beings) move in a real environment. However, Bush does not move an object around in the interstices between frames to create the illusion of movement, but rather to replace objects with related or similar-

looking ones. The point of the technique here seems to be to move the replacement objects as little as possible – to replace each insect with another as similar in size and appearance as possible – to create a semblance of unity. If the change from one frame to the next is too sudden and disruptive, the illusion would be shattered. The effect achieved is that the viewers are aware that the sequence is an illusion, and are in on the game. If the illusion is too perfect (as could be achieved with morphing effects and CGI software) the visual game is off. The magic lies in the imperfection of this metamorphosis, achieved with real objects of similar sizes and appearance replacing each other. Bush shatters the illusion at times by suddenly changing the species of insect – from beetles to wasps/moths/bees – or the number of insects on screen from a single pulsating insect to two, pulsing at different rhythms due to differences in size. The illusion is a game between filmmaker and audience – the filmmaker reminds the audience that they are watching an illusion by continually changing it and the audience accepts that reminder, acknowledging the change, and delighting in the next stage of the imperfect illusion.

Movement 2: Parys in sirkels and Movement 4: Gebaretaal in *Parys suite* use flickerfilm exclusively. Not tied to text, the two 60-second sections consciously play with the speed of flickering images to create associations between disparate imagery. In Movement 2: Parys in sirkels (video link: https://youtu.be/oqRr13RarMg), the viewer is barraged with at least 480 individual images over 60 seconds. The unifying feature in the sequence is a circular shape in the centre of the screen. The format of the circular shape on screen is kept constant, irrespective of the scale of the object photographed. The intention with the film is primarily formal and is an exploration of shape, incidental visual rhythm, and perhaps even incidental narrative. In a sense the imagery is more tightly controlled than many flickerfilms by constricting the composition of the images to a singular shape and a constant composition. The constant element of the circle breaks the intensity of the flickering effect by giving the eye a singular shape to hold on to consistently. The appearance of the circle changes rapidly – colour, texture, geographical location, semantic function, and meaning. Also important in the sequence is the negative space around the circle that contains a random range of information – from uniform surfaces to various urban backgrounds.

In Movement 4: Gebaretaal (video link: https://youtu.be/boBCeJBrCQA), the circular shape is used again, but this time imposed on a series of imagery (close-up photographs of the hands of statuary) both religious and secular. The photographs of the hands are organised in a sequence to suggest the movement of a single hand in a rather complicated 'sign language' arrangement. Due to the rapid succession of imagery, the viewer is aware of the 'dance of the hand' and fail to notice at what point exactly the imagery changes from the hands of saints to the hands of revolutionaries (Figure 25). The sequence runs for 10 seconds before multiplying and repeating. This process repeats until at 50 seconds the screen is filled with 240 circular 'flickerfilms'. The last image of the basic sequence is a hand holding a gun. Due to the rapidly alternating imagery, this image does not register with the viewer until at the end when the sequence freezes on this image – centred and sized as at the beginning and accompanied by a gunshot on the soundtrack.

Figure 25. Detail from *Parys suite*: Movement 4: Gebaretaal (Grobler 2018). Video link: https://youtu.be/boBCeJBrCQA.

Movements 2 and 4 have specific functions within the structure of *Parys suite*. Movement 2: Parys in sirkels paints a portrait of a city through the display of a set of rather random circular images. More complex in terms of the array of visual imagery, Movement 2 is less complex in terms of the application and aim of the imagery than in Movement 4. While in Movement 2: Parys in sirkels, many images are juxtaposed using match cuts allowing the viewer the freedom of associations, in Movement 4: Gebaretaal a looped sequence of images is used to construct a lexeme. How this lexeme is used has very specific implications in terms of the meaning constructed in the film, and Movement 4: Gebaretaal functions as a thematic introduction to the last movement.

5.3.4 Kinestasis

'Kinestasis' is a *contradictio in terminis* as it literally means 'movement through non-movement'. Layborne uses the term 'kinestasis' simplistically to refer to any "faster-than-slide show series of still images in a video" (Layborne 1998:115). Both Layborne

and Glennie's use of a slide show as a point of comparison for two techniques of disrupted-image animation illustrate how closely related these techniques are.

Kinestasis can be divided into two categories:

- Single still image: The creation of movement using a single still image that would typically entail the camera moving across a still image or series of still images and thereby tracing a narrative by drawing attention to specific parts of such an image or series. In *The Aroma of Tea* (2006) by Michael Dudok de Wit (Netherlands) a small dot travels across vast abstract landscapes (Figure 26). Neither the dot nor the imagery travelled across are animated as such. A sense of movement is created by sliding the dot across the imagery, with the camera following its journey by panning across still imagery.

Figure 26. Michael Dudok de Wit's *The Aroma of Tea*, (2006). Animation, 3 minutes 39 seconds. Still-video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TewvScBiBn4.

- Non-sequential stills as video: The creation of a sense of movement by the manipulation and editing of non-sequential stills into a video sequence. The resulting illusion of motion is intentionally jarring and disjointed, and the movement – where movement is attempted – intentionally imperfect.

Election Abstract (2017) by artist Cornelia Parker (United Kingdom) (video link: https://youtu.be/KFFUXXdlRqA) is a 3 minute 9 second animated film and makes a good case for Glennie and Layborne's use of the slide show comparison. The film was commissioned as part of Parker's duties as official Election Artist of the 2017 United Kingdom elections. Parker used more than a thousand original photographs and videos that were recorded and posted via her Instagram feed (@electionartist2017) during the period leading up to the 2017 United Kingdom elections. Her Instagram feed served as a

personal diary in her preparation for her election commission, and the film *Election Abstract* grew organically out of her observation and documentation of the campaign trail.

> Over the period captured there were multiple terrorist attacks: Westminster, Manchester, London Bridge, Finsbury Park Mosque, and immediately after the election, the Grenfell Tower fire disaster. The never-ending news cycle is intercut with pressing issues and anxieties expressed by the public and witnessed by the artist (Dawson 2018:[sp]).

Parker's main output of the election commission is an eight-minute film *Left Right & Centre* (2017), a film with high production values that is beautifully lit, filmed, and edited. On the other hand, *Election Abstract* is a three-minute onslaught of images and sound. The pace of the film is hectic, bombarding the viewer with imagery directly from the campaign trail interspersed with signs and symbols from daily life that are juxtaposed with found footage of television interviews, newspaper headlines, and some seemingly random imagery of cats, dogs, a tree being cut down, and opening and closing doors, among other imagery. The film is a response to "seeing the political spectrum played out everywhere I looked … The street signs, rubbish in the streets, paint spills, coffee stains took on extra significance. There was an overload and so much with which to deal. Nevertheless, the project seemed quite attractive – this short, sharp immersion" (Parker in Dawson 2018:[sp]).

Within a narrow definition, Parker's film might not be regarded as kinestasis, or even as animation, as it includes a large amount of live footage. However, how she applies her moving imagery is more characteristic of animation than of live-action filmmaking. The live-action footage used is at most 3 seconds in duration and is often only a fraction of a second. The fact that Parker works with snippets of video rather than still imagery is more meaningful as a reflection on the context in which the work was created than as a means of technically categorising the work. How Parker juxtaposes her imagery communicates a large amount of information, social commentary and criticism in a short span of time. The film opens on a black screen with the title in a simple white font. After 4 seconds it fades to television footage of former British Prime Minister Teresa May talking about "strong and stable leadership with me in the national interest". While the visuals cut away to three newspaper front pages in rapid succession, reading 'May heads for Election Landslide', 'Blue Murder', and 'Corbyn Flies the Red Flag'. The images flicker and repeat, visually mixing and interspersing with an image of blue paint on asphalt, the

remains of a campaign event. Then the film cuts to a 2 second slow-motion sequence of people on a bridge with flowers left at the railing – evidence of a terror attack days before. Sometimes Parker uses predictable imagery with inherent political potential to drive home the concept of a political battle being fought, such as writing on a road of 'Keep Left' and 'Keep Right' that flashes on screen in quick succession. These are interspersed with surprising and humorous imagery, such as a close-up image of a bronze-sculpted woman's shoe (from a statue of Margaret Thatcher at the House of Commons) that is flipped horizontally back and forth to simulate the idea of the foot stepping on something and grinding it into the earth. The film goes through the whole of the election process, from protests before and the campaign trail, through the voting process, the outcome, and the aftermath at a fast speed. Imagery is on the screen for a fraction of a second, before being replaced by another intense image that is often not obviously related to it.

In Figure 27, there are 12 disparate images shown that are taken from the first ten seconds of the film. These are not all consecutive images. The individual images, or snippets of video, remain on screen for only a fraction of a second. Within ten seconds, Parker shows the viewer a political leader, two opposing media views in newspaper headlines, debris from a political campaign, a memorial after a terrorist attack, graphic images on an escalator as public service signage, a map of London, a homeless, unemployed person, mailboxes at the houses of parliament, random lettering from public signage, dials and knobs of a public address system, and a worn upholstered seat from parliament. The film is powerful and effective because of how it addresses and presents social issues in an extremely fleeting manner, reflecting the spirit of its time through its process of production. The bombardment of imagery is essential because the artist is working with raw, unprocessed imagery. A slower pacing of the film would turn it into a preachy video, or give it a propagandistic feel. The speed of the film is disorientating. The viewer knows what the film is about,[15] although the artist does not take an obvious stance or express a political opinion. By showing apparently un-curated and seemingly random imagery, it may seem as if Parker merely crammed national media coverage of a six-month period into a video of three minutes. However, the

[15] Even though the viewer might not be living within the society and political culture addressed in the film.

selection of imagery is not random, and the frantic pacing of the film is intentional and significant because the combination and juxtaposition of images and sound create meaning. The use of the imagery to make a film is significant, as opposed to, for example, an exhibition of the material that the viewer could browse at leisure. Parker (Dawson 2018:[sp]) wants to subject the viewer to a "short, sharp immersion", to almost stun the viewer into comprehension – not just a comprehension of the issues presented, but of the magnitude of social crises implied[16].

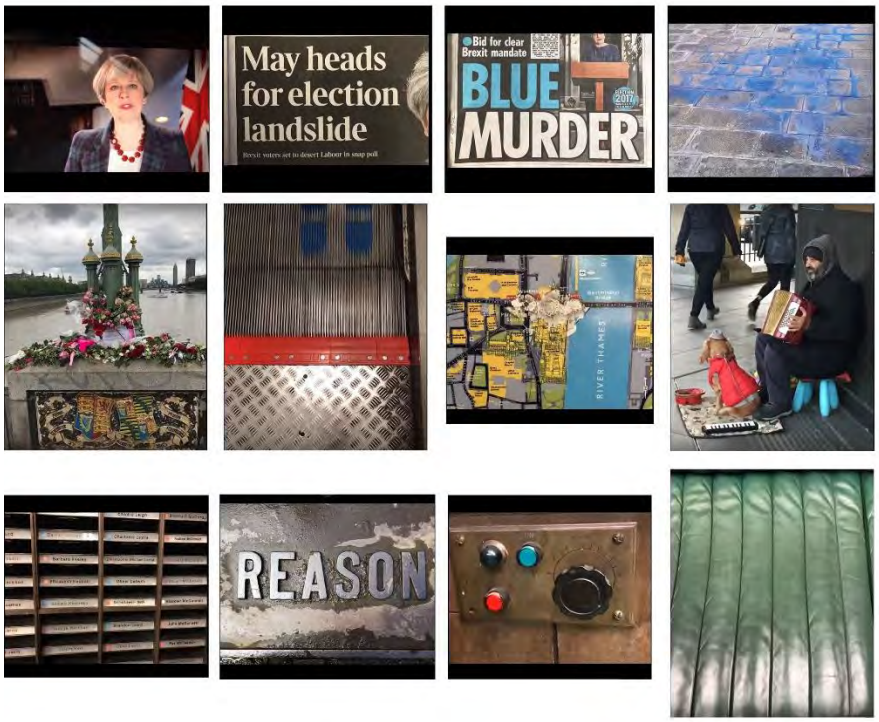


Figure 27. Cornelia Parker, *Election Abstract* (2017). Video art, 3 minutes 9 seconds. Screengrabs from the first 10 seconds of the film show the eclectic diversity of images with which the viewer is bombarded.

Kinestasis as an animatic approach is used in *Parys suite* in Movement 3: Amon L'isa, and Movement 5: nagwaak. What distinguishes using kinestasis in the films from Layborne and Glennie's 'slide show' is using unifying backgrounds throughout the films. The slide

[16] Parker (Dawson 2018:[sp]) says of the film: "I was in the mood to do it because I was in such turmoil. Because of Brexit and Trump, I was feeling quite discombobulated and I thought this could be a way of engaging more fully with what's going on …. This is the time we all need to engage politically. We need art more than ever because it's like a digestive system, a way of processing".

show is projected onto a wall. The screen is flattened, presenting the viewer with a picture plane as a framing device upon which objects are placed and moved around.

In Movement 3: Amon L'isa imagery is presented to the viewer on two flat surfaces. Firstly, on a mottled beige wall composited from photos of the actual walls of the room in which the *Mona Lisa* hangs and forms the backdrop for the placement of visual elements through vertical editing for the first half of the film. Secondly, at 1 minute 15 seconds an abrupt cut occurs in which the gallery wall is replaced with a full-screen surface of blue graph paper (Figure 28), which has until that point been part of the stylised representation of the *Mona Lisa*. The cut at this precise point is meaningful and deliberate, as it is at this moment that the painting 'leaves' the museum and becomes 'the star of a peep show', as if the poet has lost sympathy. The jump cut reflects a turn of events in the text.

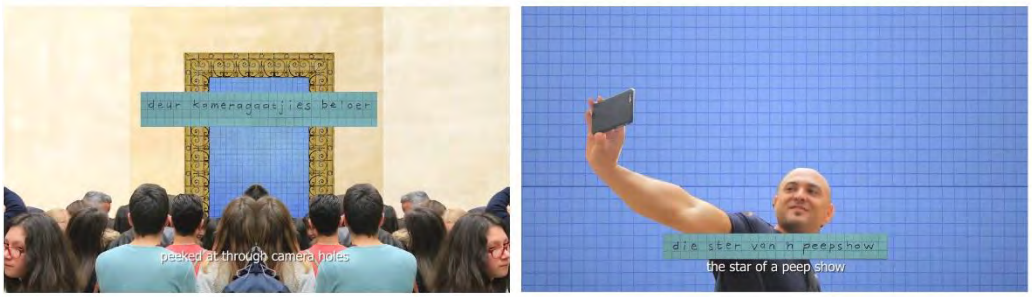


Figure 28. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Abrupt cut in Movement 3: Amon L'isa – the only time in the film that there is a total disruption of the unifying picture plane. Video link: https://youtu.be/Z1I0LP5XeGQ

In Movement 3: Amon L'isa the spectators are depicted in three kinestatic segments that present three different views on the crowd. In the first segment (00:23:16 to 00:31:13), the audience is shown from the side, viewing the painting that is off-screen to the right (Figure 29a). Because the sequence is comprised of photographs taken manually in rapid succession, it could be regarded as pixilation despite the crowd not being directed or manipulated. The sequence is presented as it was filmed in its original photograph format in which the back wall of the gallery is whitened out to avoid the distraction of the large colourful paintings displayed there. In the second sequence (01:10:10 to 01:16:05), the crowd is filmed from behind while they face and photograph an oversized representation of the painting. The background of the photographs has been cut away to isolate the figures. The sequence is mirrored (Figure 29b) to create a

symmetrical composition and maintain a sense of order ‘while the painting is still in the room’.

In the third sequence, the painting disappears and the photographs that depict the crowd are non-sequential (Figure 29 c). The sequence consists of an increasingly dense layering of individual cut-out figures and mounting chaos in the crowd. The confusion created in this third sequence, drives the visuals to the conclusion of the text – a condemnation of the painting having become “an orgy of scrutiny”.

Figure 29. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Three phases from the evolution of the spectators in Movement 3: Amon L'isa. Video link: https://youtu.be/rhZOXsEk4KE

Kinestasis in Movement 5: nagwaak is used for the expressive potential of its double significance. The static image carries meaning both in what is portrayed and how it is portrayed. For example, the hands in Figure 30 communicate meaning as hands (in terms of its multitude of metaphorical significance), statuary hands (in terms of being commemorative, ritualistic), and the emotions portrayed through the depicted gestures (in this instance that of gentle hands in relaxed poses, holding objects). How the hands are presented (as roughly cut fragments from photographs) holds further significance.

Figure 30. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. A series of non-sequential photographs of statuary hands simulating an embrace while the text of the poem lists the unifying causes of the public protests.

Glennie’s reference to flickerfilm as an “extremely fast slide show” captures the essence of disrupted-image animation. A slide show consists of a series of single individual

pictures that each carry a meaning of its own, and also functions in relation to the entire 'show'. The focus in disrupted-image animation is on meaning and the creation of meaning through the rapid juxtaposition of images. In animation, no single image is of importance, apart from its position and function within a sequence that aims to effect smooth movement. In disrupted-image animation, meaning is manipulated by avoiding smooth movement and by isolating individual images for the information they contain.

5.4 Multiple modes of editing in disrupted-image animation

Arnheim (1957:21) differentiates between the appearance of real life and that of cinema in terms of the behaviour of time and space: "There are no jerks in time or space in real life. Time and space are continuous. Not so in film. The period of time that is being photographed may be interrupted at any point …. And the continuity of space may be broken in the same manner". Of course, jerks in time and space are introduced in film through editing, and that such manipulation is possible proves to Arnheim that film is an art form and not a case of mere mechanical reproduction. In *9 Ways to Draw a Person* (2015) by Sasha Svirsky (Russia) (video link: https://vimeo.com/279353673), the animated film is full of jerks, interruptions, and discontinuity. Both in the content and style of the film, Svirsky avoids the restrictions and conventions of mainstream animation production, displaying all the characteristics that Wells (1998:43–46) attributes to abstract animation, namely abstraction, specific non-continuity, interpretative form, evolution of materiality, multiple styles, the presence of the artist,[17] and the dynamics of musicality. Svirsky's work seems spontaneous, a concept slightly at odds with animation that is by definition calculated and precise.

> My approach to making animation is the consequence of my main goal to enjoy the creation process itself. I avoid the conventional approach because such an approach makes sense if one has to subject the working process [to] certain external purposes which I don't have, so, I don't need it. I even failed to read the entire 12 principles of animation since I found it boring and felt that it could influence my animation in the way which I don't like (Svirsky 2020).

Jeffrey Bowers (2018:[sp]) compares Svirsky's work to the Dada movement for his mixing of abstraction and figuration and his mixture of mediums, such as photo collage, ink paintings, and computer tablet drawings, among others. The Dada connection could

[17] Svirsky does all the artwork and animation in his films himself.

be extended to include content or meaning in the film, which is as disjointed and 'nonsensical' as the visual style. The Dada connection in the poetry-film has a specific relationship between the visual imagery and the text, in that Svirsky wrote the poem himself after working on the film for a while. He realised that the images on their own were too disjunctive, and therefore not communicating effectively what the artist was envisioning the film to be: "I made up the title of the film first and then, during a process of pondering the film that I had intended to make I realised that I need a text that would be a skeleton for visual imagery. So, the poem was initially intended to play a service role and visualisation was viewed as end in itself" (Svirsky 2020).

> *9 Ways to Draw a Person*
>
> 1. You can draw a person like a bird…
>
> Or draw a person like a bird would draw them
>
> Or draw a person like a bird would speak or it chirps
>
> 2. You can draw a person who eclipses
>
> A person eclipsing a house or a tree
>
> Or draw a person eclipsed by another person
>
> 3. Or you can draw a person as an incongruous awkward fool
>
> 4. Or draw a person and in place of his head is a tree
>
> Or in place of hands two giant fish
>
> Instead of two feet, there would for example be two wheels or a fire hose
>
> To the point where a person really doesn't look like a person at all
>
> 5. If you need to or want to you can draw a person as a little pin
>
> A dot in the place of a head, a hyphen instead of a body or four hyphens for the hands and the feet or perhaps even three are enough.
>
> 6. You can draw a person in detail … not too much detail … way too much detail
>
> 7. Or you can draw a person by only drawing one part of them
>
> Who says you're supposed to draw the whole person?
>
> 8. Or you can draw another person or you can draw a person drawing that person … as if he was drawn by another person. And by accidentally drawing a person you may not notice that in fact, you've drawn a person.
>
> (Svirsky 2015)
>
> (transcription from the film by Diek Grobler:2020)

In his text Svirsky purports to address numerous ways to capture a person's likeness through association, abstraction, and obfuscation. As the title indicates, the film

presumes to be a how-to guide and is divided into eight numbered sections. The ninth way to draw a person is left to the imagination or might be the film itself. It becomes clear right from the outset that the presumed purpose of the film is a myth, as the disjointed visual imagery and the narrated text has no clear aim of imparting drawing skills. Svirsky uses a narrator to prompt the audience with an odd, but visually concrete statement: "You can draw a person like a bird …", the text accompanied by a rapid barrage of disjointed imagery fleetingly referring to both persons and birds.

Figure 31. Sasha Svirsky, *9 Ways to Draw a Person (*2016). Three screengrabs from the barrage of imagery from the first section of the film.

The second line of text hints at the absurd nature of what is to follow – "Or draw a person like a bird would draw them". Visually, the artist depicts a 'confrontation' between a person and bird, the tiny bird facing off against a much larger person. The attention then shifts to the bird, and several birds are depicted in quick succession, with a flashing speech bubble to indicate the sound mentioned by the text. Among the flickering images is a hand grabbing at a bird, the bird turning into an aeroplane which seems to be dropping bombs (Figure 31), followed by a series of increasingly abstract shapes flickering at a rapid pace, to the fast-paced music accompanying the film. The imagery and music die down as the end of the first section is reached.

The rest of the film follows suit. The text has a vague bearing on what is depicted in the imagery, and the imagery presents infinitely more possibilities than the possibilities mentioned in the text. There are often confrontations hinted at between figures, or between bird and figure, or figure and environment.

Figure 32. Sasha Svirsky, *9 Ways to Draw a Person* (2016). From the second section; “You can draw a person who eclipses”.

Svirsky designed, directed, and animated the film, and wrote the poem to accompany it. Each of the eight sections has a characteristic soundtrack, mostly consisting of a piece of fast-paced music. Uncharacteristically for animation – especially when there is such a tight correspondence between image and music, the film was completed before the soundtrack was composed. Svirsky structured the film through visual rhythm and pacing, which served as structure for the music composed afterwards. The characteristics of Svirsky’s work are his combination of styles and techniques, which range from beautifully executed drawings and paintings to intentionally ‘crude’ digital drawings and collage elements (Figure 32). He uses a combination of frame by frame, and database filmmaking, structuring his film chronologically, and editing while animating.

The making of the film itself entails a large amount of improvisation, with style forming while the animation process happens. Consciously avoiding the ‘12 principles of animation’ and smooth naturalistic movement, Svirsky never uses storyboards for personal creative reasons. Storyboards would also not be practical, as the rapid pacing of his films, and the conceptual and stylistic leaps, would require a very complicated storyboard for including each shot.

Figure 33. Sasha Svirsky, *9 Ways to Draw a Person* (2016). Screengrabs from a section of the film where the pacing partially relaxes by having a section of the image remain stable for several seconds.

Reviews on Svirsky's film mention its "Dadaistic tendencies" and how it "embraces irrationality, absurdity, and chaos over logic realism and reason" (Bowers 2018:[sp]). Bowers' choice of words demonstrates how live-action cinematic principles shape the perception of animation. Logic, realism, and reason are presented as the norm, and Svirsky's film is perceived as irrational, absurd, and chaotic because imagery is made to move by means that do not mimic real-time footage. The reference to Dadaistic tendencies is not incorrect. Frank (2019:36) points out that Walter Benjamin observes Dada to operate by the principles of montage, and structuring using interruption, which is what Svirsky uses in his film. Svirsky (2020) argues that his "working process [is] more like a stream. It lasts a while after it has started and then it finishes". In this regard Svirsky's work links back to my own experience of the creative process in *Mon Pays*. The visual material is self-referential, and the relationship with the text is inferred rather than specific, the process could have stopped at any time, or have continued indefinitely. Even though a relationship exists between film and text in both cases, the connection is fluid and the link suggestive rather than fixed.

5.5 Conclusion

Database filmmaking entails the deliberate construction of diverse and versatile animatic fragments to compile a database of material from which a narrative can be compiled. The fragment becomes as important in animated film as a lexeme, a unit of meaning that can be applied in various ways to shape and adjust its meaning. The processes of disrupted-image animation have fragmentation at their core, accentuating the interstices between the individual frames in a filmic sequence, disrupting the comforting, smooth flow of animated movement, and often focussing on individual images in a sequence. Disrupted-image animation wilfully destroys the illusion of naturalistic movement that conventional animation seeks to achieve, to draw attention to the individual frame that conventional animation seeks to hide within a multitude of similar frames.

The process of editing functions as a strategy to structure narrative by manipulating space and time through the process of selecting, joining, juxtaposing, and ordering filmic fragments, reversing fragmentation to make a whole out of disconnected parts. Editing as narrative strategy functions in a similar way as writing in that concepts are formed, and ideas are expressed by combining, juxtaposing and manipulating cinematic

‘lexemes’ (still images, filmed and constructed footage, and sound) from a ‘retrospective’ position. In animated poetry-film, filmic language exists in a symbiotic relationship with the lyrical poem on a communal timeline where they function at times in unison and in contrast or juxtaposition. The visual, literary, and auditive modes are combined through the editing process to construct a unified, multimodal narrative.

Chapter 6: Database filmmaking in *Parys suite*

Editing from a database filmmaking point of departure is postulated as the most meaningful way to construct an animated poetry-film in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, this position will be motivated specifically through the analyses of the methods and processes of applying pre-created database elements to 'build' the complex film *Parys suite*. The structuring of cinematic form and meaning through the process of editing of database elements, consisting of visual elements, sound (voice, foleys, and music) and text, into a cinematic artefact will be investigated as a narrative strategy in the creation of the animated poetry-film.

6.1 Introduction to the film

(Video link for *Parys suite*: https://youtu.be/ADv5yepS8SE)

In 2016, I attended a residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, the specific purpose of which was to formulate a research proposal for my study. I intended to use the opportunity to experiment with various kinds of photography-based animation processes. Eventually, I decided to put these experiments to use in a poetry-film about my experience of Paris. The film came about in an indirect and organic manner as the theme of the film was selected before suitable poems were chosen. Searching for a poet who had a strong link with the city, I was referred to Carina van der Walt, an Afrikaans poet living in Tilburg in the Netherlands. Van der Walt had written several poems dealing with issues ranging from identity to disillusionment. All the poems centred around Parisian imagery or personalities like Edith Piaf, Coco Chanel, Marie Antoinette, and Saartjie Baartman. She sent me a collection of poems, two of which I found suitable for interpretation as poetry-films. The poems expressed aspects of the city that were already surfacing in my animation experiments. I asked Van der Walt to write a third poem about the #NuitDebout protests of March/April 2016 that I attended. The impression that this public protest action made on me had a definitive influence on my perception of Paris, and I wanted to include the impression in the film. The resulting film presents a very personal portrait of the city.

The film is episodic in format, 13 minutes in duration, and consists of seven parts. The seven parts of the film are clearly separated from each other by a fade-out. The fade-out is structurally and conceptually important as it creates a divide between the seven

concepts presented in the film. Visual cross-references are used between the concepts, and they are differentiated from each other using style, diachronic inscription, and editing devices.

The seven episodic parts of *Parys suite* are:

- The prelude consists of a 60-second static view of a room, filmed using time-lapse technology, during which the title credits of the film are displayed.
- Movement 1: Piaf consists of a poetry-film of the poem *Piaf* by Carina van der Walt. The duration of the movement is 2 minutes 20 seconds. The technique employed is mostly hand-drawn animation based on pixilated footage.
- Movement 2: Parys in sirkels (Paris in circles), a 60-second flickerfilm that could be termed a film-poem or motionpoem as no text inspired its creation and no text is used in the movement.
- Movement 3: Amon L'isa consists of a poetry-film of the poem *Amon L'isa* by Carina van der Walt. The duration of the movement is 2 minutes 26 seconds. A combination of techniques is used, including hand-drawn animation and pixilation. The primary process of the film is kinestasis.
- Movement 4: Gebaretaal (Sign language) consists of a film-poem with a duration of 60 seconds using the concept of flickerfilm as point of departure.
- Movement 5: nagwaak (vigil) consists of a poetry-film of the poem *nagwaak* by Carina van der Walt. The duration of the movement is 3 minutes 3 seconds. A combination of techniques is used, namely kinestasis, flickerfilm, stop-motion animation, and hand-drawn animation.
- The postlude consists of a 60-second view of the Concorde station on the Paris Métro, filmed using time-lapse technology, during which the end credits of the film is displayed.

Parys suite is a personal film, expressing a personal experience of the city. It avoids drawing a definitive conclusion, circling some ideas about the city, digressing and even interrupting its central train of thought. These are qualities that Elizabeth Papazian and Caroline Eades (2016:3) ascribe to the 'essay film'. Altria Alter (Rascaroli 2008:24) does not regard the essay film as a genre since it strives to be beyond constraints – whether formal, conceptual or social. The essay film is both structurally and conceptually transgressive, self-reflective and self-reflexive. The ethics of the essay film consists of "establishing each time the ground rules of its own coming into being …. This constantly re-establishing of its own conditions is a deeply moral gesture that presupposes the

possibility of failure, and that inscribes into the text the condition of its own undoing" (Rascaroli in Eades & Papazian 2016:300). The essay film is not reliant on facts and information, which is replaced with complex thought and does not need to be grounded in reality. Alter (Rascaroli 2008:7, 8) uses the term 'essay' because it signifies a composition that is between categories and as such is transgressive, digressive, playful, contradictory, and political. Alter's description of the essay film fits *Parys suite* (I do not mean to claim such a categorisation for the film with this statement). This circumscription of the essay film by Alter and Rascaroli describes the essence of the (so-called) experimental film – that there is a willingness not to lay down ground rules or be bound by pre-formulated definitions – instead to redefine the medium for each text.

6.2 Theme

The episodic format chosen for *Parys suite* was a strategy to avoid a clichéd perception of the city by fragmenting and scrutinising aspects of it, while acknowledging the importance of the clichés. George Dillon (2006) addresses the concept of cliché in terms of the relationship between creativity, originality, and relevance. Having become itself through multiple uses, the cliché is not regarded as creative or striking for its lack of originality. Dillon points out that for the sake of communication, it is more important for a unique communicative moment to be apt than striking "and the apt word or phrase may not be a novel one" (Dillon 2006:102). Therefore, clichés and references to and subversions of clichés function as an important meaning-making device within a visual semiotic system.

The *Mona Lisa* might be a cliché in the perception of the painting as the pinnacle of the Renaissance, a symbol of Paris, and the pedestrian mysteries woven around her by popular novelists. Those clichéd perceptions of the painting are scrutinised in Movement 3: Amon L'isa. Similarly, Movement 1: Piaf might be perceived as a clichéd representation of various tropes, such as the struggling artist with the tragic life, and the essence of Parisian romanticism, among others. Shifting the thematic focus in Movement 1: Piaf to that of time, freedom, and personal worth turns the clichés in the material into probes.

6.3 Format

A film in which various of the aspects of the city could be explored was judged to be a better way to present a personal experience of Paris without presuming to be comprehensive. The term 'suite' in the title is significant in terms of reflecting the film's structure as a collection of independent yet related units. The term 'suite' is applied in various aesthetic disciplines to refer to a work that comprises a collection of elements in art, music, dance, and architecture. The various sections of the film are referred to as 'movements' as it reflects using 'suite' in both music and dance while at the same time reflecting the fundamental concept of movement in animation. The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'suite' as:

> a. A succession or series; in earlier use often applied to a series of publications; now chiefly said of series of specimens.
>
> b. A number of rooms forming a set used together by a person, a family or company of persons.
>
> c. 'Music'. †*(a)* A set or series of lessons, etc. *(b)* a set of instrumental compositions (originally of movements in dance style) to be played in succession; also, an assemblage of movements from opera or ballet scores (OED 2010. Sv 'suite').

The interrelatedness between the elements of a suite and the simultaneous acknowledgement of the differences between the elements is important. The achievement of unity in a collection of potentially disparate elements is an important requirement of database filmmaking and its animation and editing techniques, and will be explored in my discussion of the production processes.

The main narrative strategy employed in *Parys suite* is that of editing, specifically taking a montage approach to juxtapose imagery through irrational cuts. Sound (and sound-editing) is used as a narrative device in conjunction with visual editing. While a broad range of animation techniques is used in the film, my analyses will focus on disrupted-image animation and the way it aligns with retrospective editing as narrative strategy.

In the discussion of the production processes and narrative strategies, attention will be focussed on the three movements containing poems, namely Movements 1, 3, and 5. The prelude, Movements 2 and 4, and the postlude will be commented on briefly in terms of their relevance within the overall narrative strategy and their role in the overall structure of the suite.

6.3.1 Prelude

(Video link: https://youtu.be/Rnpq-zrws-M)

The prelude is not announced as such and is used as a title sequence and sets the scene for the suite to follow (Figure 34).

Figure 34. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Prelude; The variation in lighting seen in the above four screengrabs is the only indication of an interrupted recording process was used to record the scene.

In terms of narrative, nothing 'happens' in the prelude but the passing of time and the viewer is made aware of the manipulated process of recording.

The sound accompanying the visuals is a real-time recording of ambient sound in a corridor outside of a rehearsal room at the Cité Internationale des Arts. The recording was done with the built-in recorder of a smartphone, unaware and unrehearsed, and can be regarded as 'found sound'.[1] The soundtrack is presented as diegetic sound to the visuals and might even be perceived as the actual sound recorded by the camera by a

[1] With reference to the concept of 'found objects' (*objets trouvé*) in art and 'found footage' in experimental filmmaking.

viewer not familiar with the technicalities of the recording equipment and recording process.[2]

In terms of Wells' (1998) narrative devices I use synecdoche in the prelude. The prelude has a significant function in that a suite of rooms is depicted and metaphorically established as a point of departure, a clean slate, a site from which will be observed and in which will be created. The suite is empty, waiting to be populated, and via the soundscape the room is identified as a site of creation, like a soprano practising her scales signifies preparation, and how her mistakes are identified by the pianist and corrected, suggests a space of trial and error. The room is a synecdoche of the city as a creative space, and the passing of time visible in the time-lapse footage a synecdoche for the time spent in the city (from before the occupant's arrival until after the occupant's departure). The almost imperceptible passing of time could also serve as metaphor for the timelessness of the city. Time is literally condensed from three hours to a 60-second clip, and that nothing of significance is seen happening, is significant.

6.3.2 Movement 1: Piaf

(Video link: https://youtu.be/3Q-FkMZbYAo)

Movement 1: Piaf consists of a poetry-film of the poem *Piaf* by Carina van der Walt. It is a romantic poem referencing the tragic life of the famed singer. The poet uses the sparrows of Paris as a direct metaphor for the singer, as Edith Piaf was nicknamed 'the sparrow of Paris'.

This poem was selected for the film for two main conceptual reasons. Firstly, the poem was selected because it is romantic, nostalgic, and charming – the typical clichéd, but apt perception of Paris. Edit Piaf is a personification of that cliché. Secondly, the poem was selected for the themes of value versus worthlessness, loneliness, freedom, and time that underlie the poem. The challenge in the film was to avoid sentimentality and to enhance or add additional meaning to the poem using the visual treatment. Visual

---

[2] Time-lapse recording devices do not record sound because of the disrupted process of recording a single image at predetermined intervals.

treatment in the animated poetry-film refers to the visual style in which the material is depicted and to how that style is presented over time, or its diachronic inscription.

Piaf
the sparrows of Paris
live but an instant long
off the crumbs
of the many people
on the summery terraces

padam padaam padam
short are their lives and grey
padam padaam padam
little their worth in black
padam padaam padam

they lightly bounce
from chairs to tables to
sidewalks among feet
of all the many people
on the summery terraces

padam padaam padam
Long was her life and her suffering
padam padaam padam
high her value in black
padam padaam padam

the sparrow of Paris
was so similar & so different
from the sparrows of Paris
(Van der Walt 2017)
(Translated by Diek Grobler, with permission of the author 2017)

6.3.2.1 Conceptual approach

The visual style chosen to depict this poem reflects its romantic nature, and thus a hand-painted Parisian cityscape (Figure 35) and hand-drawn animation of sparrows is the mainstay of the visual material.

Figure 35. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Screengrab of the opening sequence – Movement 1: Piaf.

The poem is rather direct and unobscured in its signification, and using the visual imagery reflects directness for the greater part of the film. There is a degree of illustrational correspondence between text and imagery in the film. When the voiceover refers to sparrows, sparrows are seen in some action on screen. The depiction of the sparrows on screen does not follow the text, but rather establishes the nature of movement and behaviour of the little birds. For example, in the first verse reference is made to crumbs, and to many people on summery terraces. The sparrows are depicted foraging on a grey sidewalk, but neither “many people” nor “summery terraces” feature at all. The sparrows are depicted in their mannerisms of movement and the flurry of taking flight when alarmed. Reference to the people mentioned in the text is made by a couple of shadows passing briefly across the screen, causing the sparrows to take flight.

When Edith Piaf is referred to, her static silhouette is seen briefly on a balcony. The camera views her from behind, from inside a darkened room as she stands etched against the light, framed in a doorway (Figure 36). Outside in the light, sparrows fly past. The only movement she makes is moving her arms to put her hand on the balustrade. The darkness of this scene and the heaviness with which she is depicted are juxtaposed with the sparrows' lightness – how they move, and how they are rendered in thin and sketchy hand-drawn lines.

Figure 36. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Screengrab from Movement 1: Piaf, in which Edith Piaf is depicted darkly and heavily, in stark contrast to the lightness of the sparrows.

The last third of the film does not correspond to the text of the poem directly and goes beyond the text. This sequence is a metaphor for issues present in the poem that are not directly addressed. The sequence depicts or signifies that which is to be read between the lines (Figure 37).

Figure 37. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Screengrabs of the closing sequence of Movement 1: Piaf.

From an empty grey background (sky from the preceding section), line drawings of the balcony balustrade, and the square of the window opening fades up. The two graphic images linger for a few seconds before colour (substance) in the walls and the balustrade fades in as the cage appears with an 'incomplete' rendition of the sparrow using a black line drawing on a white body. Colour then gradually fades in on the sparrow before the sparrow disappears. With this technical revelation of the functioning (or creation) of the imagery, I reveal the use of the visual language as deliberately and consciously as the poet does construct a poem via the ungrammaticalities[3] of her language. Not directly belonging to the poem like the visuals with which the spoken

[3] See my reference to Riffaterre and poetry in section 2.3.2

poem overlaps, this part of the film represents a postscript by the filmmaker. This postscript is a personal conclusion that comments on the narrative that has gone before it and makes a connection to the rest of the suite in highlighting recurring themes of freedom versus restraint.

6.3.2.2 Technical approach

Compared to the other movements in the film, Movement 1: Piaf has the most conventional technical approach, namely hand-drawn 2D animation and smooth naturalistic movement. However, disrupted-image techniques were already used in the collection of reference material for the animation of the sparrows. The sparrows are a very strong presence in the poem, and their typical movements succinctly described. I felt the sparrows' movements required a certain degree of naturalism in their appearance and movements. An often-used process to obtain a certain accuracy of naturalistic movement would be the technique of rotoscoping.[4] However, I shot the reference material by hand as rapid succession shots, thus cutting down the frame-rate of depicted movement from 24 frames per second to five frames, which is the number of images my still camera can capture per second in rapid shooting mode. In effect, I created a pixilated film sequence that I then used as reference for my drawn animation of the sparrows (Figures 38 and 39).

---

[4] Furniss (2008:327) describes that rotoscoping "involves filming live-action reference footage and projecting it frame-by frame onto animation paper, so that it can be traced and modified. The drawn images are then filmed, creating animated imagery that is highly realistic in its movement".

Figure 38. Photographic reference for a movement sequence of a sparrow in Movement 1: Piaf.

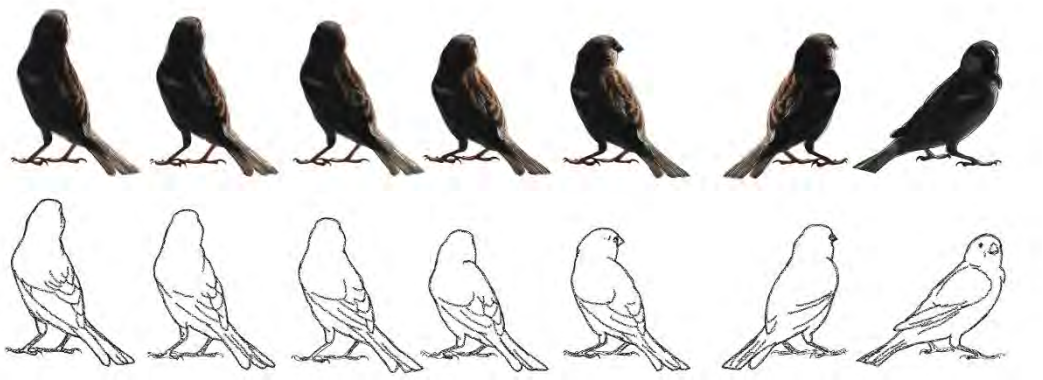


Figure 39. Technical steps in the transformation of the photographic sequence in Figure 38 into an animated sequence.

The reason for this creative decision concerns the aesthetic of movement. Although rotoscoping would have produced a smoother and more realistic movement of the sparrows, the interruption of smooth movement creates a jerkiness more characteristic of the character of sparrows. The rate of movement of the sparrows affects the rhythm of the film. The sparrows keep their position for three counts before changing to the next. This is most notable in the sequence starting at 0 minute 58 seconds (Figure 40), where a single sparrow is repeated in three horizontal groupings across the screen. A limited sequence of frames is looped several times and repeated nine times across the screen. Until this point, the placement of the sparrows on screen simulated a naturalistic space although the sparrows are rendered as line-drawings and are placed on a grey surface (a sidewalk or terrace). Downscaling the sparrows placed higher on the screen maintains an illusion of depth in the picture plane, as they appear to be further from the camera. In this sequence this illusion of space is shattered, as the sparrows are all of the

same size, are evenly distributed across the screen, and repeat the same motions. The viewer is made aware that it is the same looped sequence. This looping constitutes a metaleptic transgression, as the animator reveals himself as author of the film, and the sparrows as lexemes in his vocabulary.

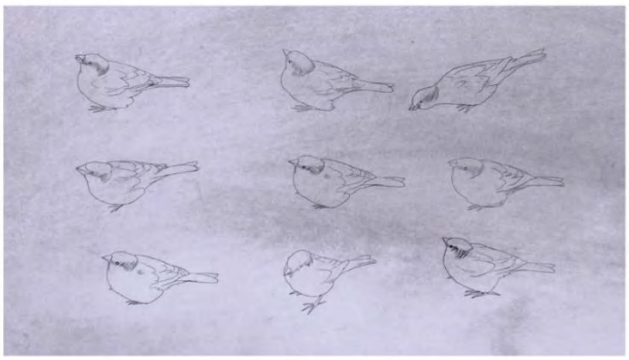


Figure 40. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. From Movement 1: Piaf. The repetition of a single looped sequence across the screen shatters the illusion of space that existed until this point.

The next sequence starts on an empty grey screen to which sparrows are continually added until the screen is filled to the extent that animated sequences overlap, revealing that the sparrows are only made of lines, without body or volume (Figure 41). The film screen is revealed as a flat surface rather than a window on a world in three-dimensional space.

Figure 41. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. From Movement 1: Piaf. Animated sequences of sparrows overlap, negating the illusion of space, and revealing the nature of constructing the film.

The filmmaker moves between modes of treating the screen as a window and treating it as a canvas. In Figures 35, 36, and 37, stills from sequences are shown in which a sense of space is evoked in the portrayal of a city – a woman in a room and a bird in a cage. In other sequences from the film (Figures 40 and 41) figures are layered on top of each other to accentuate their flatness. This self-consciousness of the animated film about the mechanics of its construction denotes a metalepsis – a transgression of the filmmaker into the world of the film. The transgressions are further explored in the subsequent movements of the suite.

6.3.2.3 Structural approach

The poem consists of four verses of five lines each, and a fifth verse of three lines. Repetition is an important characteristic of the poem, both structurally and in terms of content. The first and third verses mimic each other, the first three lines of each describe the life and behaviour of sparrows, and the last two lines of each verse are almost identical. Similarly, the second and fourth verses mimic each other in that the first, third and fifth line are the refrain “padam padaam padam” that references the song *Padam* by Edith Piaf. In the remaining two lines of these verses, the life of the sparrows is contrasted with that of Edith Piaf. In the last verse of the poem the poet offers a conclusion: “the sparrow of Paris was so similar & so different from the sparrows of Paris”. Even this verse almost repeats itself in terms of wording (by using sparrow(s) and Paris twice) – the slight difference in the two words (the singular ‘sparrow’ versus the plural ‘sparrows’ in the repetition) accentuates the similarity and also the enormous difference between the birds and their namesake. These instances of repetition lend a fitting musicality to the poem which is reflected in the structure of the film.

Specific design decisions were made to reflect the structure of the poem as it appears on a page.

a) Subdued colour palette of mostly greys;
b) Limited range of imagery that is repeated with slight variations;
c) Style of editing that reflects the musical structure of the poem; and
d) Visual conclusion by the filmmaker to reflect the conclusion of the poet.

Figure 42 gives a graphic representation of the film to illustrate its structure. The timeline is organised downwards vertically (to reflect the appearance of the printed poem on the page) and consists of two columns, namely audio and visual. Text is included in the audio column as a voice rendition of the poem is used, and it is interwoven with the sound design. The structural diagrams (also used for Movements 3 and 5) present a way to visualise a complex temporal artwork in a single graphic image to analyse its formal structure. The structural diagrams also divide the single structure into its interdependent aspects – the visual and the auditive. Organised in this way, the extent to which the structure of the sound design and visual depiction reflects the structure of the poem (or digresses from it) is clearly visible.

When compared with the printed text of the poem (see 6.3.2), the structure of the poetry-film (as temporal artwork) is less rigid and less-precise. The duration of verses vary, as does the duration of intervals between verses. The same is true of the duration of the deliveries of the chorus line “padam padaam padam”. Whereas the reader of the printed poem determines the pace and duration of a reading, in the poetry-film pacing is predetermined by the director. The director determines when a longer pause is needed to allow for the maximum impact of the text and the sound and tone of voice in which the text is delivered. The poem on the printed page is dependent on the structure of the language to convey its meaning. In the poetry-film, the burden of giving meaning is dependent on additional structures of communication – that of sound and of visual imagery endowed with specific duration.

Figure 42. A visual representation of the film structure of Movement 1: Piaf.

6.3.2.4 Sound as a narrative device

The 'musical' structure of *Piaf* limits the poem in the sense in which it can be presented to the readers or audiences. The poem can be read quietly, with the readers deciding how to present the musical elements to themselves. However, the poem cannot simply be read aloud. The poet references Edith Piaf's famous song *Padam*[5] using the refrain "padam, padaam, padam" as a line in her poem. Because the word 'padam' has no real meaning apart from being an onomatopoeic representation of the recurring beat that follows the singer around,[6] the word has a significant effect on how the poem can be presented or read and gives the poem an inherent performative character. Wells (1998:104–106) lists acting and performing as possible narrative strategies available to animation, referring to the animator acting through the characters in character-driven narratives. In this case, no character or characterisation is involved, but the performative nature of the poem required that a rather specific approach was taken in the voiceover – the 'padam' refrain has to be sung as it would be nonsensical to merely present it in a reading voice to do justice to the reference.

The soundtrack contains a voiceover reading of the poem by actress Elsabé Zietsman who was selected for the mature and gritty quality of her voice. Although Edith Piaf is not present as a character in the film – despite the appearance of a brief silhouette of a woman on a balcony – a characterisation of Piaf is presented through the choice of the voice artist. The narrating voice becomes a character in the film. The voice artist also becomes 'Piaf the singer' for that brief chorus, before reverting to being a voice reporting on Piaf, fluctuating between a diegetic and mimetic narrator as classified by Ryan (2003:11).

The melody of the chorus of the song also had to be incorporated, as the three repetitions of the word 'padam' could not be used in isolation and still make sense. The rhythm of the phrase following "padam padaam padam" in the poem, does not follow the rhythm of the original text in the song. Therefore, the singing of the padam-chorus

---

5 The song was written for Edith Piaf by Henri Contet (lyrics) and Norbert Glanzberg and was originally released in 1951.

6 As expressed in the lyrics of the song: "This tune which haunts me day and night … And its voice drowns out my voice. Padam padam padam" (video link https://lyricstranslate.com/en/padam-padam-padam-padam.html-7#songtranslation).

had to be isolated from the rest of the text of the poem in terms of its characterisation and performance. The singing carries on in a humming of the melody in the background to aid the natural flow of the narration. The melody of Piaf's *Padam* is introduced by a piano at the outset of the film and woven throughout the film to create lyrical links between sections of text and to create unity in the film.

Minimal diegetic sound is used and is limited to the chirping of sparrows and the fluttering of wings, as too much ambient noise could distract from the poem. Thematically, the poem focuses on the sparrows, and the diegetic sound used in the film focuses solely on them. Although people are represented by shadows moving across the generally grey area of the screen, they are not endowed with sound. The significance of people (the crowds of people are Piaf*s* implied audience) is covered by their presence in the text. Adding people visually or referencing them using the sound design by adding ambient sound to represent the crowds mentioned in the text would have been superfluous and overstating their significance within the context of the poem.

The sound design in Movement 1: Piaf is direct and focussed on the imagery presented on screen. The viewer does not have to make associations between imagery and non-diegetic sound or draw conclusions about meaning based on sound as the main stimulus, as is the case in the two later movements in the suite, Movement 3: Amon L'isa and Movement 5: nagwaak.

In terms of Ryan's[7] classification of narrative modes into binary pairs and my appropriation of the pairs to circumscribe mediality in animated poetry-film, I made conclusions about the narrative functioning in this movement. The diegetic (text) and mimetic (visual material) modes are here closely related, both visual and auditive material adhering to the content addressed in the diegetic narrative – when sparrows are mentioned, sparrows are shown and heard. When Edith Piaf is mentioned in the text she is shown. However, the mimetic narration is not merely illustrative, as the visual spectacle is made to play with its own conventions in the way objects are drawn, drawings are animated, and animated drawings are layered and manipulated. Therefore,

---

[7] (Ryan 2003: 1 -23). As discussed in 2.3.1.

the narrative modes become indeterminate and metaphorically demanding that the recipient participates in constructing meaning from the semiotic clues.

6.3.3 Movement 2: Parys in sirkels (Paris in circles)

(Video link: https://youtu.be/oqRr13RarMg)

A carefully manipulated form of flickerfilm is used in Movement 2: Parys in sirkels – a 60-second textless sequence composed of photographs of circular shapes taken all over Paris. Circular objects were photographed at random as they were encountered, and include traffic signs, rose-windows in churches, the halos of saints on church vestibules, café tables, ceramic plates in museums, and wheels, among others. The circular shapes were filmed to be of corresponding size within the picture frame, irrespective of the size of the object, applying the editing principle of the 'graphic match' used in a match-cut, in which the editor uses similar objects or shapes in successive shots. In this flickerfilm, a match-cut occurs after every frame. The purpose of the exercise was to create an animated portrait of the city through a single recurring geometrical shape with strong symbolic value. Circles are found everywhere in the urban landscape – from the most sacred to the most mundane situations (Figure 43).

Figure 43. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Stills from Movement 2: Parys in sirkels that consists of a flickerfilm of corresponding circular shapes.

In flickerfilms the image rate usually corresponds to the film or video projection rate – 24 or 25 images per second. However, in Movement 2: Parys in sirkels the image rate was lowered and the sequence plays back at eight individual images per second. The rate at which frames are displayed was adjusted from the standard video rate for two reasons:

- The flickering of 24 frames per second was simply too fast and the visual rhythm did not feel comfortable. The intention in this animated sequence is not to create the illusion of smooth movement, but rather to replace movement with transformation, and therefore keep a constant shape in the middle of the frame. Since the negative space surrounding the circle still changes, sometimes drastically from one image to the next, a frantic flicker effect is still experienced by the viewer, which a slower image rate calmed down to a point where the circle remains the focus of the changing image.
- A slower frame rate allows the viewer to see more. Although the eye can register images at a very high speed, imagery could become too subliminal. At an image rate of eight images per second the viewer registers most of the content, even though details of only some of the images are recognised and actively recalled.

The sequence was edited to control the rhythm of the film by grouping images with similar backgrounds and colouring together. Imagery of stained-glass windows, or the gothic sculptures of religious figures were interspersed with a series of images that differed substantially in colouring and content reference. In a sense, the imagery is more tightly controlled than many flickerfilms by constricting the composition of the images to a single shape and a constant composition. The constant element of the circle breaks the intensity of the flickering effect by giving the eye a single shape to hold onto consistently. The appearance of the circle still changes rapidly in colour, texture, semantic function, and meaning. Movement 2: Parys in sirkels does not contain text and is not based on or accompanied by a poem. Therefore, the visual material had no obligation to illustrate, demonstrate or juxtapose pre-existing meaning. The visual material had a single purpose, which is to create a visual portrait of the city.

6.3.4 Movement 3: Amon L'isa

(Video link: https://youtu.be/bQd1r9jj-98)

The second poetry-film in the suite is based on *Amon L'isa* from Van der Walt's collection of poems about Parisian women. The subject matter, the *Mona Lisa*, was a source of typical romantic idealisation for the poet who knew the Nat King Cole song from an early age and the painting from seeing numerous reproductions throughout her life. Van der Walt's typically clichéd romantic and idealised perception of the painting was shattered when she visited the painting for the very first time and encountered a throng of rowdy tourists clamouring for a quick selfie with the painting. The poem

expresses the poet's shock and disappointment at this disillusionment. The painting itself is not the subject of the poem, but rather how it is treated by the viewers. The poet never names or describes the viewers, only how they view.

Amon L'isa
lonely in a cell of glass
you stare dully at them who collectively know who they are
and impose themselves on you

- desire and revulsion
in equal measure
man and woman –

initially you were self-consciously
caressed to life
from the timid painter's hand
of Leonardo da Vinci

later blatantly distinguished
by Marcel Duchamp
with pencil moustache and goatee

L.H.O.O.Q.

now you are being possessed
peeked at through camera holes
the star of a peep show
an orgy of scrutiny

L.O.L.

(Translated by Diek Grobler, with permission of the poet: 2018)

6.3.4.1 Conceptual approach

My conceptual approach to this film was influenced by a discussion I had with Van der Walt about the poem. I never had the same kind of romantic reverence for Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, but having experienced the madness that plays out daily in front of that painting and many other revered artworks in the Louvre and other museums, I

understood her disappointment and frustration. The *Mona Lisa* is regarded by many as a pinnacle of artistic achievement, a highlight of the Renaissance, and an artwork shrouded in mystery. It is a famous image, much copied, commemorated, and lampooned. The throng of viewers passing in front of the painting on a daily basis have a fleeting interest in the artistic merit or historical significance of the artwork, and are more concerned with taking a selfie with the painting in the background. Van der Walt found the behaviour of the mass of spectators disturbing, even vulgar, as expressed in the last verse: “the star of a peep show/an orgy of scrutiny”.

I identified a few themes that would influence my stylistic and conceptual approach:

6.3.4.1.1 The poet addresses the painting directly

The poet addresses the painting directly as she would a person, to an extent sympathising with its plight. The painting is of little real importance to the viewers. The painting is relatively small, hangs rather high on the wall, and it is not possible to get a worthwhile look at it unless you are right at the front of the throng. The painting itself does not feature in the film. The *Mona Lisa* is depicted as a sheet of blue school-book graph paper in a fairly crudely drawn frame. Two squares are cut out of the paper, through which only the eyes of La Giaconda are visible (Figure 44). She is literally censored from the gaze of the viewer, her eyes functioning as a synecdoche for the painting. The image is so well-known that the viewer does not need to see the entire painting, and the focus on the eyes makes the absence of her body more significant. The barricading of the female subject behind a banal blue barrier has intertextual references suggesting captivity and shame, and also of the mundane. La Giaconda is stripped of her glamour so that the viewer may not be blinded by it. Like the tourists, the viewer may only see her on the viewfinders of their photographic devices.

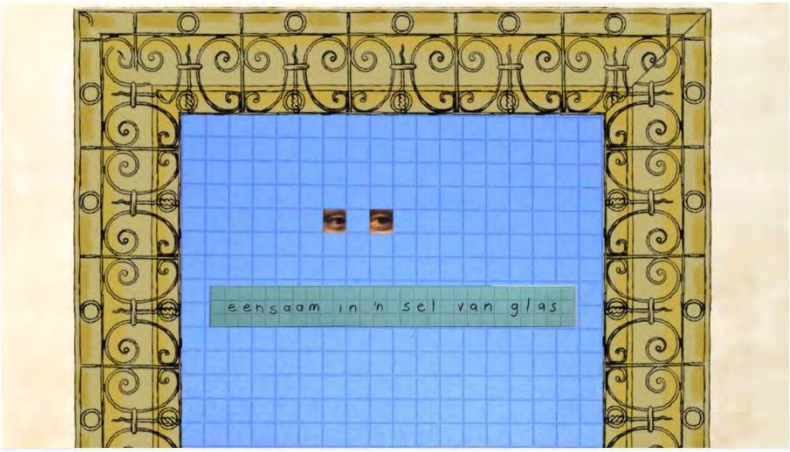


Figure 44. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Still from Movement 3: Amon L'isa. The eyes are the only part of the *Mona Lisa* visible in the film.

6.3.4.1.2 The gaze

Photography is a theme in the poem. The photographs of the tourists come to represent 'the gaze' that supposedly bestows meaning on the artwork. The kind of meaning bestowed is what the poet questions. Through the poetry-film, the potential of the gaze as a leitmotif is elevated as in the poem where words related to the gaze are directly present ('stare dully', 'peeked at', 'peep show', and 'scrutiny'). The relation to the gaze as an objectifying process can be inferred ('impose themselves on you' and 'now you are being possessed').

Feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey (1975:10) argues that spectatorship in cinema entails two forms of looking. Firstly, is scopophilia or voyeurism, in which the viewer (subject) is distanced from the object viewed (the subject on screen, or a painting, like the *Mona Lisa*). Secondly, looking "demands identification of the ego with the object on the screen through the spectator's fascination with and recognition of his like. The first is a function of the sexual instincts, the second of ego libido" (Mulvey 1975:10). Furthermore, Mulvey defines three sets of looks: "(1) the camera's look at the pro-filmic reality (2) the audience's look at the final film product, and (3) the characters' looks at each other" (Chaudhuri 2006). In terms of the conceptualising and production of the poetry film we are concerned here with two combinations of 'forms' and 'sets':

- Within the film, the set of looks is that of 'characters looking at each other' – the exchange of look between the spectators and the *Mona Lisa* is the form of looking

that arises from narcissism. Even if the standard concept of the male gaze is hinted at in an ironic manner in the last verse, the gaze of the subject(s) on the object is autoerotic. The aim of the gaze is not to see or to objectify the seen, but rather to see the self being seen by extending the gaze to the camera.

- Between film and audience, the audience's gaze at the film (and the object of desire in the film) is asexual. Firstly, the object of desire is hidden from view, with the exception of her gaze, her disembodied eyes are the only parts of the painting displayed on screen. Secondly, the nature of the gaze is the subject matter of the film and results in the gazers in the film becoming the objectified.

The film therefore focuses on the spectators rather than the painting, using photographs with which to depict them, for its metaphorical implication: the act of photographing is a way of seeing. Photography is also the only way in which the real extent of the chaos in the museum could be depicted. Taking a kinestatic approach, the tourists were photographed from the side while looking at the *Mona Lisa*, and also from the front and the back, photographing her and photographing themselves in front of her (Figure 45). The painting is only ever visible in the film through the mobile screens of the tourists' photographic apparatus.

b c

Figure 45. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Screenshots of various crowd scenes in Movement 3: Amon L'isa in which the gaze is redefined by the spectators of the painting.

6.3.4.1.3 The specific use of the text

Due to the poet's use of certain acronyms/abbreviations that can really only be read rather than verbalised ('lol' and 'L.H.O.O.Q'.) the text in the film is only presented in written format, and not voiced (Figure 46).

'Lol' is a phone-texting abbreviation for 'laugh out loud' and has to be seen as text and not heard in a voiceover. Apart from 'lol' not customarily being spoken so hearing it could lead to incomprehension, 'lol' is an abbreviation characteristic of a generation and

cultural consumerism that the poet is addressing. However, as a written phrase 'lol' is instantly recognisable.

Similarly, using *L.H.O.O.Q.* (the derogatory caption given by Duchamp to his appropriation of the *Mona Lisa*) as a line in the poem complicates using a voiceover of the poem in the film.[8] The only way the phrase makes sense is if pronounced in French, as Duchamp intended. The vulgar French expression implies sexual promiscuity. However, using the phrase auditively in the film would make it inaccessible to a large section of the audience. As a written phrase, however, it is instantly recognisable to viewers familiar with Duchamp's work.

In contrast to the slickness of the technology by means of which the *Mona Lisa* is being observed, and as a comment on the level of intellectual involvement of the spectator with the *Mona Lisa*, the text is written by hand on mathematical graph paper, as if it could be a part of a school project.

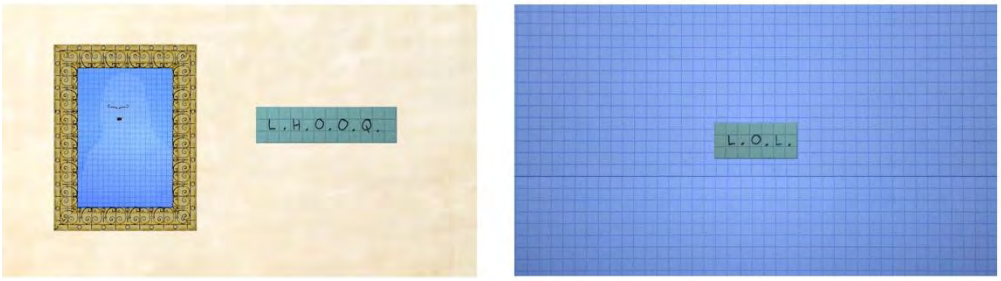


Figure 46. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Unpronounceable abbreviations in the poem *Amon L'isa* necessitates a text-on-screen approach to presenting the poem in the film.

6.3.4.1.4 Derogation of the artwork

The poet comments on how the painting is stripped of the sublime by the banality of how it is viewed. The *Mona Lisa* is desecrated and insulted. In the film this desecration is extended to Leonardo da Vinci and his work in general, by using graffiti imagery of both the artist and the artwork, and by lampooning both the art and its audience: Da Vinci's

---

[8] Duchamp's appropriation of the *Mona Lisa* was already a comment on the consumption of the artwork as a mass-produced tourist icon.

Vitruvian Man summersaults across the screen to the music[9] to which the can-can was danced in cabarets in Paris (Figure 47).

Figure 47. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. The contempt with which the animator treats Leonardo da Vinci and his art reflect the 'unintended' contempt with which the visitors to the museum treat the *Mona Lisa*.

At the end of the film a colour-by-number simplified version of the *Mona Lisa* (Figure 48) is drawn by the same hand that earlier represented Marcel Duchamp drawing a moustache on La Giaconda and Da Vinci's suggested hand when the hand appearance on screen coincided with the mention of the "timid painter's hand//of Leonardo da Vinci". This hand is in fact a drawn animation of the animator's own hand, functioning as a synecdoche for all the mentioned artists, and by extension for the act of creation, recreation, and appropriation that is part of the lifecycle of the artwork.

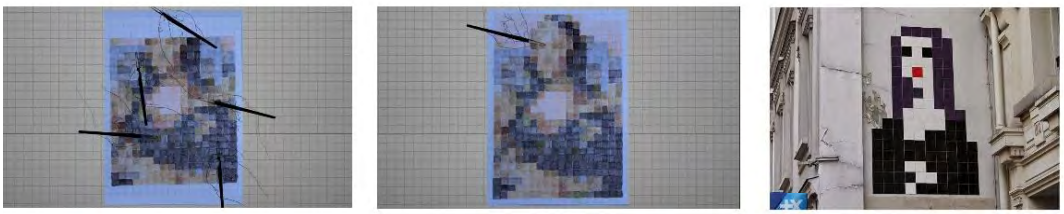


Figure 48. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. At the end of Movement 3: Amon L'isa a mosaic-like simplified version of the *Mona Lisa* references the work of Parisian graffiti artist, Space Invader.

6.3.4.2 Technical approach

The main technical approach in this film is that of kinestasis, as movement is created out of still imagery. For the most part, kinestasis is done digitally during the editing process,

---

[9] 'Infernal Galop' from Act II, Scene 2 of Offenbach's 1858 operetta *Orpheus in the Underworld*.

using three kinds of database material, namely photographs, digital collages, and hand-drawn animated 'stock footage'.

6.3.4.2.1 Photographs

The photographic material used can be put into two categories: The first category concerns two sequences filmed using a pixilation or time-lapse approach. Still photographs were taken of the crowd in rapid succession with the intention of creating a disrupted movement sequence. The filming was done with a hand-held still camera (Figure 45a and 45b). The second category entails single unrelated photographs used in rapid succession, not to evoke an illusion of movement as such but rather a rapid juxtaposition of related images, reflecting the bustle and chaos in the crowd (Figure 45c).

6.3.4.2.2 Still images

Again, there are two kinds of imagery with various narrative functions. The first kind is created as digital collages to represent sets and props. These images appear on screen for a short while to establish a setting or represent an element from the narrative. The most prominent of these is the stylised *Mona Lisa* in her frame. The film opens with a close-up of the hand-drawn frame containing blue graph paper, on which '*Mona Lisa*' is written by hand. This image reappears – with variations – a few times in the film as representative of the painting (Figures 44, 45, and 46).

The second kind of image is the representation of text and single lines of text are hand-written on strips of graph paper. They have a dual signifying function. The text is arranged on screen to be part of the image, functioning as self-conscious subtitles and as part of the visual image they also narrate the literary narrative. The placement of the text is dependent on the overall composition of the frame. At times the text is supportive of the placement of pictorial elements, and sometimes it is used in an obtrusive manner by being placed prominently over imagery (Figures 45 and 47).

6.3.4.2.3 Animation

The animated sequences can be divided into two types, namely hand-drawn animation and stop-motion animation.

There are two examples of hand-drawn animation. In the first example, the 'hand of the artist' that was created by rotoscoping[10] footage of my own hand while drawing. The same sequence is used in three instances in the film (Figure 49).

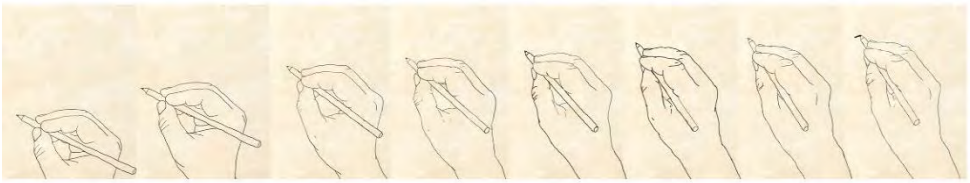


Figure 49. Eight frames (detail) from a rotoscoped sequence: *Parys suite,* Movement 3: Amon L'isa (Grobler 2018).

In the second example of hand-drawn animation, Da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* is traced and altered to draw the figure in the various positions suggested in the original drawing (Figure 50). The Vitruvian man also undergoes a sex change with reference to the hint of gender confusion in the text and in the title of the poem[11] and in popular mythology around the artwork.

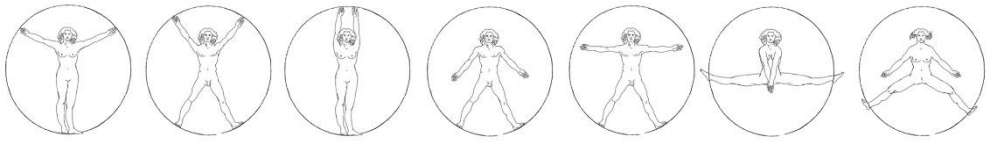


Figure 50. The Vitruvian Human Burlesque is seven frames comprising the animated sequence of the Vitruvian (wo)man. The use of only seven frames results in a very jerky movement; elegance of movement that doubles or triples the frame rate was consciously avoided.

The second type of animation is stop-motion. The single example of stop-motion is in the final sequence where a simplified 'mosaic-like' painting of the *Mona Lisa* is created by colouring the squares of a sheet of graph paper. This was shot frame by frame under camera using stop-motion photography (Figures 51).

---

[10] Rotoscoping is an animation technique in which very life-like movement is created because every image is traced from real-life reference footage (Layborne 1998:162).

[11] A theory exists that *Mona Lisa* is an anagram for 'Amon L'isa' which apparently refers to the Egyptian gods Amon and Isis. This theory is found on websites with names like crystalinks.com and perpetuated in conspiratorial popular fiction like *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown (2003). The poet's use of this anagram as the title of the poem is a comment on how the artist and the painting has become mythologised.

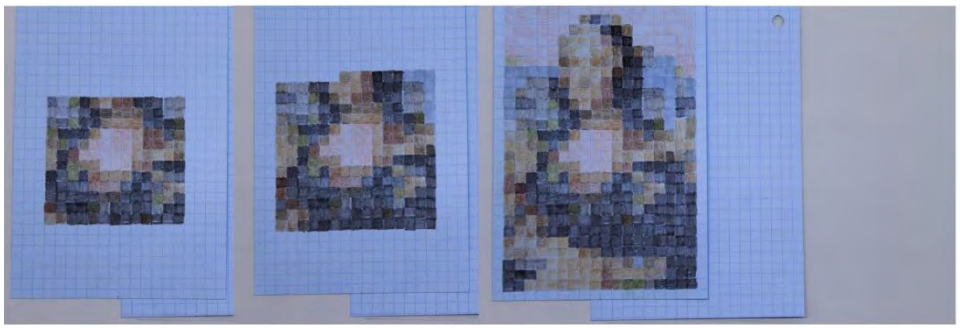


Figure 51. Three frames from the *Mona Lisa* mosaic sequence using stop-motion processes, and an improvised stop-motion rostrum.

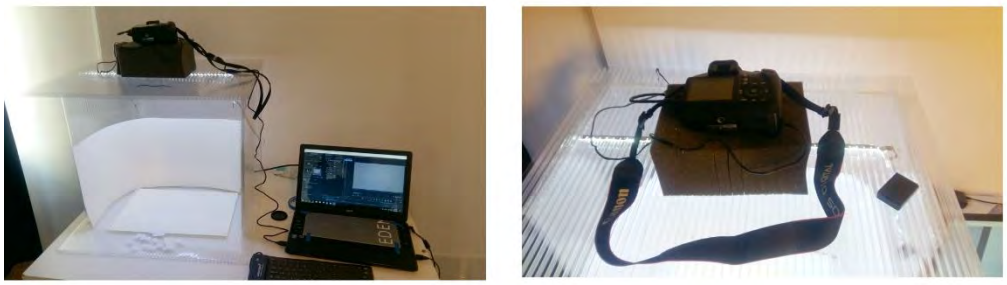


Figure 52. Improvised stop-motion animation table. Since Movement 3: Amon L'isa was created during a residency in Paris, a stop-motion rostrum had to be improvised.

6.3.4.3 Structural approach

In Figure 53, the structure of the film in terms of its placement of text, visual material, and sound effects are given in relation to a timeline to demonstrate how the various elements correspond and overlap. Figure 53 also shows how visual and audio elements are repeated to create a structure in the film that reflects the structure of the poem.

Editing is a narrative strategy in disrupted-image animation that is much more complicated than with more conventional approaches to animation. Not only does it act as a structuring process in the film, but can literally act as a process of construction In Movement 3: Amon L'isa, individually constructed elements from the database are layered on top of each other on the editing timeline. Editing is done 'horizontally' – in a linear fashion to combine pre-existing scenes – and 'vertically' using compositing. Compositing refers to "combining multiple layers within a single frame" (Furniss 2008:326) as with cell animation where a moving character is layered over a static background. Conventionally, the aim of compositing is to create unity in a scene in the

sense of combining elements that are created separately and are intended to function in unison. In Movement 3: Amon L'isa (as in Movement 5: nagwaak), the creation of the illusion of a unified space is not intended and the individual elements from the database retain their individuality. The picture plane is flattened by the application of either a flat mathematical grid, or a uniform 'beige' colour over which the database elements are applied as a form of temporal collage.

Structurally the poem consists of five verses and two one-liners. The poet addresses the painting in the first two verses and describes how she perceives the painting being gazed[12] at (and the painting's experience of the gaze). In verse three the poet reminisces, or speculates, about the original process of its creation, and in verse four about its appropriation by Duchamp. The fourth verse is followed by the first one-liner, which consists of an abbreviation used as the title to Duchamp's appropriation of the *Mona Lisa: L.H.O.O.Q*. Pronounced in French[13], this is a derogatory remark which aligns with the gaze of the throng of spectators, in the poet's view. The last verse expands on this view, describing the spectator's gaze as an "orgy of scrutiny" and ending off the poem with the second one-liner, the digital texting abbreviation 'L.O.L' (laugh out loud).

6.3.4.3.1 Sound and music

The poem is not voiced, and sound is used as structuring element and to set the tone of the film. At the opening of the film an orchestra is heard tuning that echoes the sound at the beginning of the suite of the soprano preparing to perform. The orchestra starts playing the opening notes of the *Infernal Galop* from Act II, Scene 2 of Offenbach's 1858 operetta *Orpheus in the Underworld,* during which the subverted title is animated to correct itself to 'Amon L'isa'. Music is deliberately used to focus attention on this act of correction, to draw attention to the popular theory on the (popular) title of the painting being an anagram.

This introductory section is very precisely cut according to the structure of the music. Visual cuts and introduction intertitles occur precisely to the rhythm – as the galop

---

12 The 'gaze' as used in art criticism refers to an 'intent look': "A gaze can be used to confer meaning upon a piece, whether the gaze emanates from the viewer or the work of art" (Reinhardt [Sa])

13 Pronounced in French it purports to sound like "Elle a chaud au cul" meaning "She has a hot ass".

commences the first bar of text appears on screen, and precisely on the first note of the second phrase of the galop a jump cut[14] occurs to a wide view of the painting on a wall, corresponding to the second bar of text appearing on screen (and so forth). The use of the *Infernal Galop* is intended to set a burlesque tone to the movement. The second phrase of the galop is abruptly interrupted by an irrational cut of both visual and audio content. The visual image cuts to a pixilated sequence of the spectators filming the painting in the gallery. The sequence is accompanied by audio of thundering human noise that was recorded live on location. This rather rude interruption of a pleasant, if unusual, sequence reflects the disillusion of the poet at the behaviour of the crowd. The sound abruptly cuts back to the *Infernal Galop* – the part in which, when the can-can is danced, the dancers reveal their knickers to the audience – while the visuals cross-fades to a sequence of four Vitruvian 'humans' somersaulting across a blank gallery wall. At the end of the musical phrase the music cuts away and the following two verses happens almost in silence: layered on top of some white noise are minimal diegetic sounds – the splash of a drop of paint, the sound of a pencil on paper. In the two verses the poet describes the painting of the *Mona Lisa* – first by Da Vinci and then by Marcel Duchamp. The two verses of 'artistic activity' are displayed in virtual silence as a device to elevate the contrast in content. As the fourth verse draws to a close, the white noise gradually becomes louder, revealing voices and indicating a return from philosophical musing to the madding crowd.

At the beginning of the fifth verse the film returns to the painting in the museum and the throng of tourists. The soundtrack consists of the same crowd noise as before, significantly slowed down to sound low, moaning and rather primaeval.

At the end of the fifth verse, both imagery and sound cross-fade. The imagery of the crowd is replaced with the *Mona Lisa*'s eyes, and the sound becomes a simple piano rendition of the Nat King Cole song that continues until the end of the film. The song is a strong element in the poet's idealised romantic perception of the painting and lends an air of pathos to the ending of the film.

---

[14] The cutting together two different views of the same setup, resulting in two successive shots of the same subject matter from different points of view or positions.

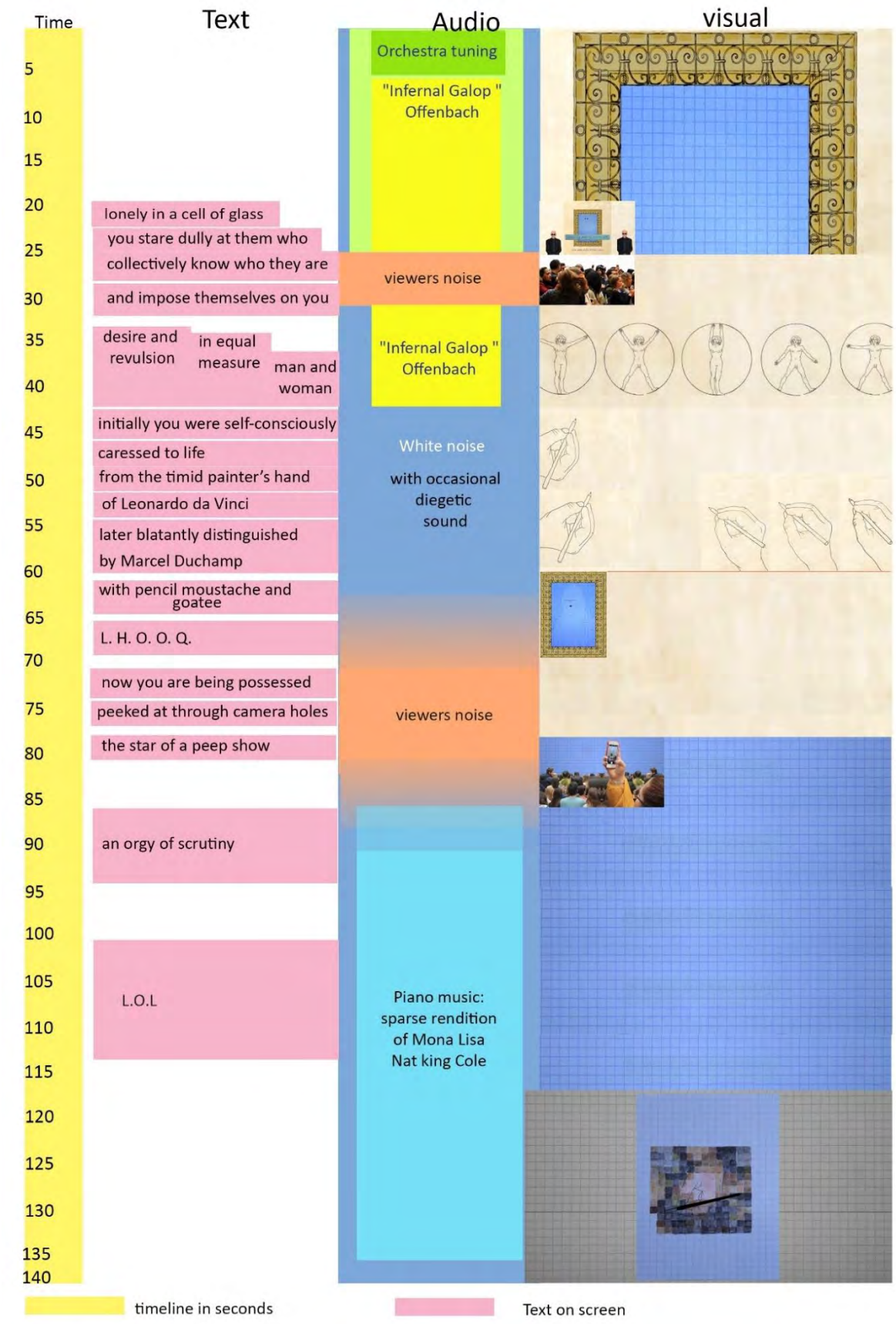


Figure 53. Diagram of the structure of Movement 3: Amon L'isa.

As in Movement 1: Piaf, the animator concludes the film with a visual sequence that is not tied to the text of the poem. This conclusion is a personal reflection by the animator on the content of the poem and could have been omitted to keep the focus on the relationship of film to text (as has been suggested in a critical discussion of the film). However, this conclusion is an important part of the authoring of the film, of identifying the animator as author of a new (filmic) text, rather than an illustrator of a literary text. The purpose of the poetry-film is to go beyond the text and this convention of adding an integrated visual conclusion is a way to achieve that.

6.3.5 Movement 4: Gebaretaal (Sign language)

(Video link: https://youtu.be/boBCeJBrCQA)

In Movement 4 the principle of flickerfilm is used again, but in a shorter, repetitive sequence contained within a static frame (Figure 54). The flickering sequence is circular and superimposed on an image of a weathered wall surface of a random building in Paris. The sequence consists of photographs of the hands of statuary of the saints on the Notre Dame cathedral, and the hands of the revolutionaries in bronze plaques on the Memorial to the French Revolution on the Place de la République. The photographs are treated with a sepia tint to remove the clear distinction between religious (usually cut stone) and political (cast bronze) statuary. The rapid display of the photographs in a filmic sequence suggests gestures in a sign language, which the viewer attempts to decipher. It is unclear to the viewer where in the sequence the hands change from religious to secular imagery. Saints and sinners become indistinguishable.

Several production layers are present in this movement, each of which has implications for the meaning of the work and the way it functions on a semantic level.

- The first layer is the single circular sequence of 65 frames. The hands were photographed in two locations in Paris, namely the Notre Dame (religious space) and the Place de la République (political space). The hands were selected for their expressive qualities, ranging from serenity on the religious sculptures to political gestures from the Memorial to the French Revolution. The sequence was carefully arranged to simulate sign language and for the simple beauty of movement – the continuity which the rapid display of the images achieves, despite the stark difference of appearance between some of the individual hands. The creative choice of statuary hands rather than a single human hand, or selection of human hands –

which would have afforded smoother movement and more control over expression – should be obvious. Statuary represents ideas and ideologies, which are incorporated into the work using synecdoche.15 Even though the exact statuary from which the hands are taken is not known, the fact that they are taken from public sculptures already implies reverence.

- The second layer is the placement of the circular clip on a neutral, weathered wall. The single circular image is juxtaposed with the wall. By layering a singular clip on a uniform surface lacking depth, the filmmaker presents the screen as a flat surface – a surface to be written on, as opposed to a 'window on a world'. The appearance of the wall could be taken to support the idea of history, tradition, and commemoration, and visually references the wall of the Louvre gallery in the preceding movement.
- The third layer entails the multiplication of the circular clip, which happens gradually until the screen is filled (three clips high, five wide). Although the clips are identical, they are not synchronised, creating the effect of more than one conversation or that the 15 clips are interacting with each other.
- The fourth layer entails a cut to a long shot. The collection of 15 discs is reduced by 50 percent to reveal a wall of disks (six high and ten wide): The reduction changes the meaning of the collection of discs – from individual hands interacting, to part of a collection that no longer represent individual actions. The detail of the movement is lost and a rhythmic pattern of repetition emerges. A further jump cut to an extreme long shot reveals a wall of 240 flickering dots, and the detail of the action is further lost in the multiplicity.
- The fifth layer entails the removal of the temporal aspect of the sequence. The sequence is halted on the last frame of a hand holding a pistol. This image – the size of the original disc and the placement in the middle of the screen – slowly emerge superimposed on the preceding extreme long shot. The single violent image is juxtaposed with the flickering collective – which also contains this violent image within each of the 240 sequences on screen.

---

15 Wells describes 'synecdoche' as "a device by which the depiction of part of a figure or object represents the whole of the figure or the object" (Wells 1998:80).

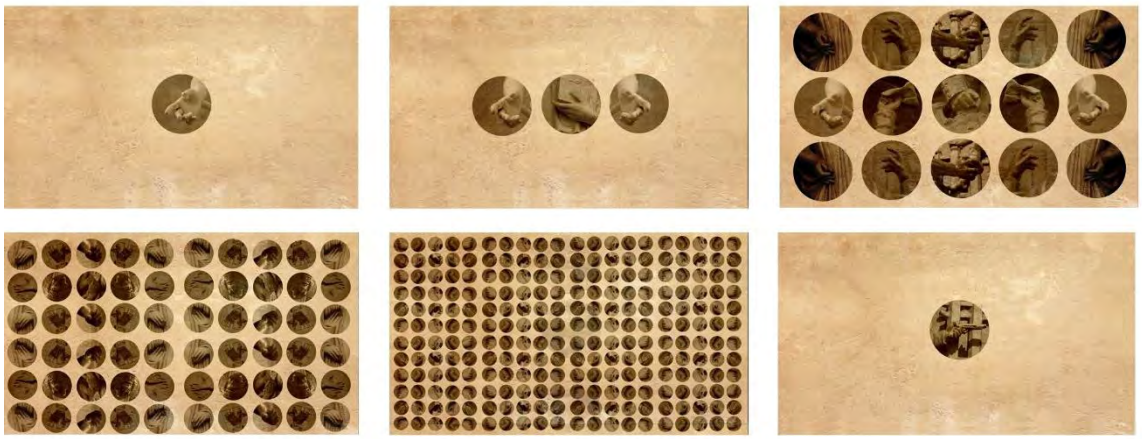


Figure 54. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. This sequence of stills from Movement 4: Gebaretaal shows the progression of the flickerfilm image through repetition. After the increasing multiplication of the frantically gesturing hands, the movement concludes with a single still image of a hand holding a pistol.

Structurally, Movements 2: Parys in sirkels and Movement 4: Gebaretaal function as 'breathers' between the trio of poetry-films. Viewing a poetry-film would be taxing as it often requires the viewer to actively participate in the construction or configuration of meaning, deciphering both visual and textual clues. Movements 2 and 4 are purely visual, rhythmic, and repetitive. The sections also function to reinforce visual motifs – the circle for instance – which recur throughout the film. Semantic meanings are also reinforced through the repetition of signs. In the soundtrack of Movement 4: Gebaretaal, a diegetic connection is made between the sound of fluttering birds and the rapid movement (fluttering) of sculpted human hands. In Movement 1: Piaf, sparrows are a strong motif and the same sound clip that is used to construct the diegetic sound effects for the sparrows flying is reapplied to the visuals in Movement 4: Gebaretaal. The application of the sound is done in such a way that it is suggested to be diegetic and the syncresis is established between the sound of fluttering wings and the sight of moving hands. The fluttering of wings is extended into the Movement 5: nagwaak, but a different sound sample is used that references the foregoing wings and hands through the similarity of sound while creating its own metaphorical associations.

6.3.6 Movement 5: nagwaak (vigil)

(Video link: https://youtu.be/ogSwdxtapDM)

This movement was inspired by the #NuitDebout protests of March/April 2016 on the Place de la République, which I attended a few times. Instigated by a range of social issues, the protests were very civilised, organised, and even poetic, its aim a social revolution by peaceful, non-disruptive protest. One evening when I attended, I found little groupings of musicians spread all over the packed square, rehearsing bits of music. It turned out to be an orchestra 'of the people'[16] rehearsing to play Dvořák's *New World Symphony* (Symphony No. 9) at midnight. *New World Symphony* was specifically selected for its symbolic implications, the establishing of a new social order, a 'new world'.[17] Collecting as much video and photographic material as possible, I asked Van der Walt to write a poem about the event. Not having been present, and relying on the documentation provided, the poet wrote a poem reflecting her stance, observing from a distance. The resulting poetry-film is the most open ended of the suite. Potentially ambivalent visual metaphors are used and layered imagery leaves room for free association.

vigil

In the evening a black butterfly keeping watch over the Place de la République

At first with her wings folded together like hands in prayer

As people are flooding the square like caterpillars for new times.

& gnawing at the old days she partly unfolds her wings, and raises the call

– Liberty, Equality, Fraternity –

As pupas sit enfolded in blankets she unfolds her wings

When two yellow eyes flash on opposite sides of the square

– fluttering of hands

United for same sex love, united against xenophobia

Rustling of voices in purple flashes

United against unemployment, against cross, kipah khimar

A conductor with a neon baton draws 4 beats in a white pattern

---

16 Anybody could join in to the music presentation at #NuitDebout, and consequently musicians joined from of all levels – from buskers to concert musicians.

17 *New World Symphony* is the popular name of Antonín Dvořák's 9th symphony and the irony of the 'new world' reference to colonised territories did not seem to occur to the protesters.

On her black butterfly wings the new world symphony sounds
The meter of civilisation accelerates: yes no yes no yes no yesss
debout! arise! staan op staan op!

On the Place de la République the butterfly is swelling with every sunset
Shivers become convulsions cocoons crack full of flounder
Delicate young people develop wings are dust between the fingers of time
(van der Walt 2017)

6.3.6.1 Conceptual approach

This film was the most difficult of the suite to conceptualise and took the longest time to complete for a few very fundamental reasons. The first reason the film was difficult to conceptualise was the complexity of the subject matter. The idea of the film was born out of a very vivid experience of a social event that resonated with me on an ideological level as an act of civil disobedience conducted in a highly intellectual and civilised manner. The protest action was vilified in the media from the very peaceful beginning. This vilification was a metaphor for the way a social protest is viewed globally: that protest against authority is per definition wrong. The subject matter was further complicated because of its situation in a foreign culture and social structure with which I am only vaguely familiar, and happened in a language of which I have only a very basic knowledge.

A second reason the film was difficult to conceptualise was the absence of an existing literary text. I chose two pre-existing poems, *Piaf* and *Amon L'isa*, for Movements 1: Piaf and 3: Amon L'isa, because the views expressed in the poems represented my point of view regarding their subject matter. In the case of Movement 5: *nagwaak* no poem existed. I asked Van der Walt to write a poem about an experience that was very specific and personal for me, an event she did not experience and that could be shared with her only via photographs and video documentation. As a result, the viewpoints of animator and poet are not as precisely aligned as in Movements 1 and 3.

A third reason the film was difficult to conceptualise was the socio-political specificity of the event. The #NuitDebout protests happened in 2016 in Paris and elsewhere in France. I documented the event and my experience of it to make a film. The time and place of the event that inspired the film, and the space in which this protest occurred is

significant. However, the event was sparsely covered by international media, and therefore is not known by many viewers. The task entailed ensuring universal significance without sacrificing specificity. The poem was completed by May 2017 and the film was completed by July 2018, two years after the protests had taken place. By 2018, the #NuitDebout protests had evolved in terms of format, aims, and principles.

The fourth reason the film was difficult to conceptualise was a slight difference in socio-political views between poet and filmmaker. Despite many corresponding views, the socio-political views of poet and filmmaker differ for various reasons as would often be the case between any two creative individuals. Presented with a collection of pre-existing texts, I could select the texts that fit my agenda for the first part of the film. The third poem was specifically written for the film, independent of the visual material specifically recorded and constructed for the film. The resulting film is a simultaneous presentation of two viewpoints which at times coincide, and at times are juxtapositional. For example, the poet (living in Europe) was surprised at the perceived cynical ending of the film, ascribing the cynicism to my living in South Africa and the negative perception generally held of public protests here. She intended her ending to be positive and hopeful, as the European perception of protest action is that it yields results. The visual material towards the end of the film could be read as conflicting with her view.

6.3.6.2 Technical approach

The film contains an assemblage of techniques also used in the preceding four movements of the suite. It contains some stop-motion, kinestasis, and flickerfilm. As in Movement 3: Amon L'isa and Movement 4: Gebaretaal, the screen is treated as a flat picture plane.[18] The technical processes will be discussed in order of appearance on screen.

6.3.6.2.1 Stop-motion animation

Two stop-motion sequences were shot and are used repeatedly.

The first stop-motion sequence to appear in the film is that of a small moth flying in on a black screen containing the title of the film. This is a very simple sequence and was

[18] At times a picture plane is allowed limited depth, with objects superimposed on it, moving across it, eclipsing it, and casting shadows upon it.

never used exactly as it was filmed. It consists of 12 photographs of three small moths constructed out of paper. The wings of the three moths were fixed in three flight positions – slightly up, open, and slightly down. The moths could still be manipulated because they were made of paper. While still representing the three basic positions, each moth's wings were manipulated slightly while being photographed to ensure variation within the repetition, avoiding an obvious loop. As demonstrated in Figure 55, the moths were photographed in an irregular order to achieve the slightly awkward fluttering. The moths were then cut out of the photographs to use against any background.

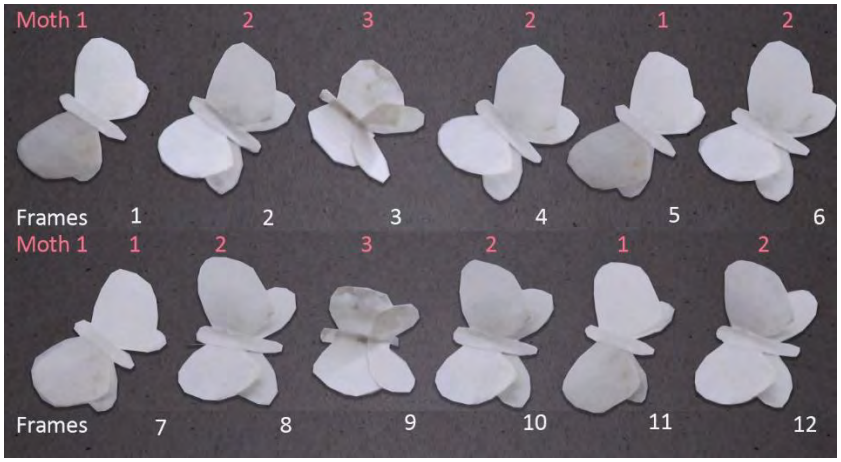


Figure 55. Flying moth sequence from Movement 5: nagwaak.

The moth is used as introductory image at the beginning of Movement 5: nagwaak and re-appears at regular intervals throughout the movement. Various instances of the appearance of the small moth clip are demonstrated in Figure 56. The 'small moth' motif shows how an incredibly simple movement cycle used within the context of database animation can become a visual lexeme – the basic lexical unit is a fluttering moth. This basic unit has its basic metaphoric significance and variations of significance achieved through the variation of ways in which the unit is displayed or made to move. Examples of the multiplication of meaning that can be achieved are the moth moving across the screen, the moth circling the title, the moth hovering out of sight with only its shadow visible, the moth perching in the centre of the circle, the moth multiplied, the moth dying, and the moths falling.

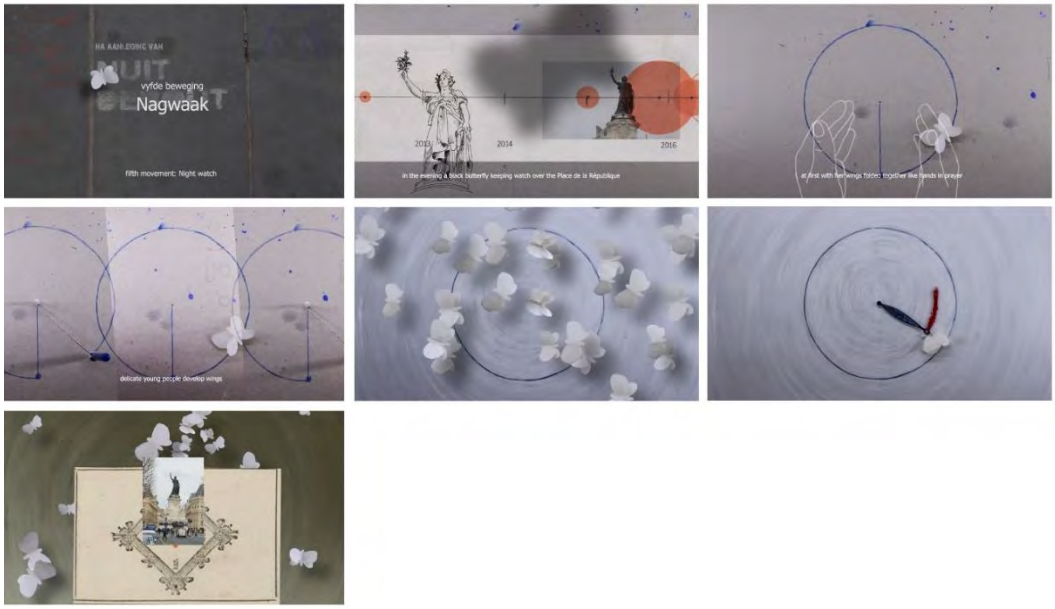


Figure 56. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Recurring instances of the small moth motif in Movement 5: nagwaak.

The second stop-motion sequence depicts a series of alterations to the appearance of the screen, which changes due to small events from grey to white, then to black and back to white (Figure 57). The sequence consists of two parts. The first part starts with a nail seen from above in the middle of a grey screen. A blue line extends from the nail downwards and stops short of the edge. A pencil materialises that is attached to the nail with a wire. The pencil proceeds to draw a circle around the nail, demonstrating a simple method of drawing a circle without the proper drawing tools. The simple drawing tools (nail, wire, and pencil) dematerialise. A small white moth enters the screen from below right, and perches in the centre of the screen. It dissolves into a white spot which starts to spread outwards across the grey surface, whitewashing it to remove all markings but the blue circle outline. The second part reverses this whitening action by gradually blacking out the screen with individual black marks, starting from the outer edges. At first, the area around the circle is blackened out, and then the circle is also engulfed. Once the entire screen is black, the outline of a large moth is painted on the black surface using white dots. After the outline has been completed, the shape of the moth is also filled in with white dots in concentric circles from the centre outwards. Once the moth has been dotted, the black negative space around the moth is covered in dense white markings so that at the end of the sequence a spotted black moth is etched against a mottled white background.

This stop-motion section is never used as a single continuing sequence in the film and instead is cut up and used throughout the film. Having been created as a single sequence, the relation between the various parts remains, creating a sense of unity and continuation in the film.

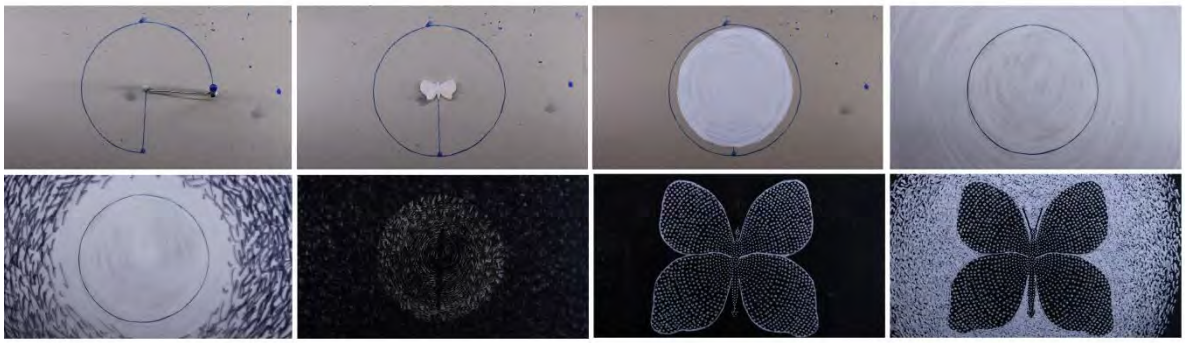


Figure 57. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Various stages of the second stop-motion sequence created as a database sequence for Movement 5: nagwaak.

6.3.6.2.2 Kinestasis

Kinestasis in Movement 5: nagwaak is applied in various ways, some of which avoid precise categorisation. I will discuss three modes in which still imagery is applied within a moving-image context.

In the first mode of kinestasis, still photographs or graphic images are used as a backdrop for animated imagery. In this case, the primary image is a scarred grey surface taken from a photograph of #NuitDebout graffiti found on the sidewalk of the Place de la République (Figure 58).

Figure 58. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. An example of how static imagery is used as a backdrop for animated sequences. The photo on the left is the original photograph of the sidewalk on the Place de la République at the time of the #NuitDebout protests.

This image is superimposed on an image of a paint-splattered, grey working surface, that is used throughout the film as a neutral background over which other imagery is layered.

This surface loses its neutrality at times as it comes to represent the 'battleground' for the protest. On two occasions the background surface ceases to be merely a background as it becomes involved in the narrative – being drawn upon, then forced to change colour from grey to white, and subsequently turned from white to black. I use the term 'forced' as the change of colour is not a gradual transition from grey to white, or from white to black, but a deliberate intrusion of one colour upon the other. Marks are added frame by frame to transform the appearance of the entire screen gradually. It is both an animated transition and a visual narrative event.

A second stable graphic image appears in the second part of the film, and was inspired by the reference in the text to an 'ochre square'. This ochre square is laid on top of the grey surface and serves as a backdrop for a kinestatic sequence consisting of statutory hands (Figure 63), while the text gives an explication of the reasons for the public action. Small squares of live footage of the protest can be seen in the upper left and right-hand corners of the screen. The function of this ochre square shape is structural – it sets the factual content apart from the more metaphoric descriptive content.

The second mode of kinestasis can be regarded as basic kinestasis, in which still imagery (both photographed and graphic) is moved across the screen to convey an idea contained both in the image itself, and the manner of its movement. Fairly early in the film a graphic representation of terror incidences in France from 2003 to 2015 slowly moves across the screen from right to left (Figure 60). The image consists of a white strip of paper on which a timeline is drawn, along which terror incidents are indicated as orange circles of varying sizes.[19] The significance of this graphic image may not be immediately apparent to the viewer, but the image also plays a structural role by repeating the circle motif that is present throughout the suite. The image also coincides with the beginning of the distorted voiceover, matching it in rhythm and thus grounding the voiceover. A second use of moving stills entails the moving of static words on banners across the screen late in the film. The word 'arise' in a bold grey font on a yellow banner rises from the bottom of the screen. The arise banner is followed by grey banners with the words '*staan op*' (arise) rising vertically from the bottom to the top of the screen. The movement of the *staan op* banners (and the way they are represented –

[19] Sizes of the circles are representative of the fatalities in each case.

in terms of fonts used and presentation on banners) aims to echo the action of rising in protest (Figure 59).

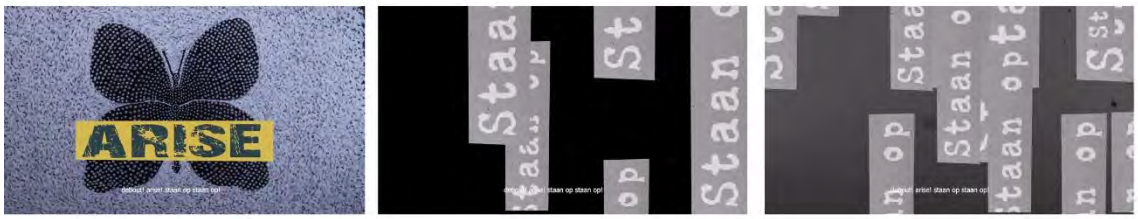


Figure 59. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. *Staan op* banners moving across the screen to evoke the action the words describe in Movement 5: nagwaak.

The end section of the film contains several found and constructed images that are juxtaposed in quick succession to create a disorienting effect. The confusion is further accentuated by using audio recorded in situ of the traffic, protests sounds and police sirens. The images are loaded with their own content related to the issue at hand in the sense that they present social and historical references (Figure 61), for example graffiti of three skeletons in the colours of the French flag, in 'hear no evil, speak no evil, see no evil' poses. A series of disjointed images of the statue to the French Republic (Marianne) serves as a comment on the outcome of social protests against injustice – offset by three post-revolution playing cards[20] that have historical reference and comment on the concept of gambling inherent in the idea of acts of social disobedience. Throughout the film, these instances of kinestasis are often layered over animated sequences that have acquired specific significance through their repeated use in the film.

---

20 "During the height of the French Revolution, a deck of playing cards was introduced that … symbolically portrayed the transformation occurring in France. They … represent how everyday objects, which often go unnoticed, can reinforce ideological beliefs in the larger cultural framework"(Zompetti 2017).

Figure 60. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Found graphic imagery is used to create a layering of meaning through kinestasis in Movement 5: nagwaak.

The third mode of kinestasis uses a series of photographic and graphic non-sequential imagery with the intention to create a sense of (intentionally disjointed) movement. The image of Marianne (the Monument to the French Republic) is presented simultaneously as a series of photographs and a series of line drawings in Figure 60. The use of both photographs and drawings are meant to represent two particular kinds of involvement with the historical artefact. Firstly, the involvement of observer or tourist, documenting the object from afar, and secondly a juxtaposed and closer involvement of a study, analysis, and representation of the object signifying an attempt at a deeper engagement with the object and what it represents.

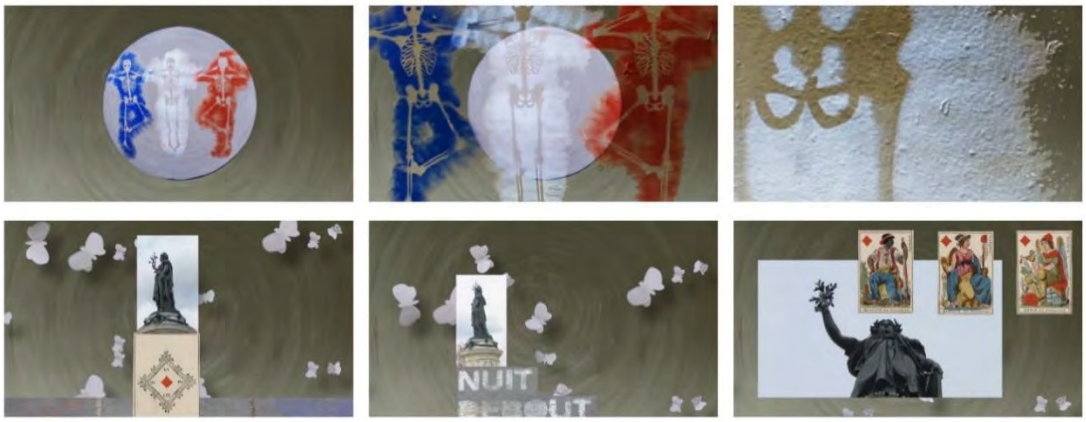


Figure 61. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Three instances of kinestasis occurring simultaneously in Movement 5: nagwaak: a graphic still of terror statistics in France moving across the screen with a series of still photographs of the Place de la République, and line drawings of the statue of victory.

A second series of non-sequential imagery was initially created to use as a kinestatic sequence suggesting movement but resulted in an unexpected comic effect. The text of the poem mentions caterpillars and pupae, referring both to the protesters sleeping on the square, and the common occurrence of homeless people in sleeping bags all over the city. A series of photographs of figures in sleeping bags were sequenced to simulate

the movement of caterpillars. The resulting animation was cruelly comic. The photographs are therefore displayed as a cinematic sequence sequentially positioned as static images next to each other (Figure 62) to avoid the inappropriate comedy.

Figure 62. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. Detail of a sequence from Movement 5: nagwaak that was intended to depict movement and instead was used as a sequence of static images to avoid inappropriate comedy.

A third example of sequentially arranged images aimed at resembling movement is a series of photographic fragments (Figure 63). Roughly cut from photographs of religious statues, the gestures are gentle, often depicting actions of giving. The photographic fragments are mirrored, the hands pointing and sometimes moving towards each other, overlapping to simulate an embrace. There is a suggestion of sign language that refers back to similar hand sequences used in Movement 4: Gebaretaal of the film.

Figure 63. Diek Grobler, *Parys suite* (2018). Animation, 13 minutes. A series of non-sequential photographs of statuary hands simulating an embrace while the text of the *nagwaak* poem lists the unifying causes of the public protests.

The static image's movement communicates meaning through how it moves, the speed at which it moves, the duration of its presence on screen, and whether it is part of a sequence of static images. In Figure 63, the photographic fragments of the hands are mirrored, the hands pointing, and sometimes move towards each other and overlap. Combined with the text of the poem – "United for same sex love, united against xenophobia" – these hands become more than just indexical. The movement adds an emotional aspect of the action of coming together, of uniting. There is a suggestion of an embrace.

6.3.6.3 Structural approach

The diagram of the structural analyses of Movement 5: nagwaak (Figure 64) is less detailed than that of Movement 1: Piaf and Movement 3: Amon L'isa. The visual material and the way the movement is composited in Movement 5: nagwaak is much more complicated, with cuts and transitions seldom precisely timed and clearly defined. The visual aspect of the diagram mainly indicates the fluctuation between darkness and light that is a structuring factor in the film. The backdrop against which the moving imagery is set continuously transitions between a black surface and grey/white. Against this gently undulating backdrop the viewer is bombarded with fragments of imagery. The meaning and purpose are often not clear and rely on the viewer's involvement to assign significance. The visual approach to the poetry-film aims to retain an element of ambiguity in how imagery can be read. As a means to achieve this, editing is less tight, with imagery overlapping and transitioning without precise boundaries, lacking the precise continuity and correspondence with the text of the previous two poetry-films in the suite.

Structural integrity is maintained with regard to the rest of the suite through the repetition of shapes and motifs. The circular shape that often features in the rest of *Parys suite* is used throughout this movement, sometimes moving across the screen and often maintaining a position of prominence at the centre of it. The circular flickerfilm is another motif used for structural reasons, relating this movement to the rest of the suite. Early in Movement 5: nagwaak a configuration of six circular flickerfilms of votive candles (Figure 30) is used as part of the extended lead-in to the voiceover.[21] These flickerfilms reference Movements 2: Parys in sirkels and Movement 4: Gebaretaal specifically, as well as other circular motifs found throughout the individual movements. Other recurring imagery from earlier movements include the eyes of the *Mona Lisa* – as they appear in Movement 3: Amon L'isa (Figure 63) – as all-seeing eyes keeping watch over the protesters as "two yellow eyes flash on opposite sides of the square".

---

[21] The candles were left is at the foot of Marianne, the Monument to the French Republic, in commemoration of the 130 people who died in the 2015 terror attack. The monument became a temporary public memorial for those who died in the attacks.

The structure of the soundtrack is fairly simple, as is the application of the text in the film, and the positioning of both in the timeline is clear in Figure 64. With regard to sound and music, some tropes emerge in this movement which will be discussed in detail in 6.3.6.4 for its structural importance to the entire suite.

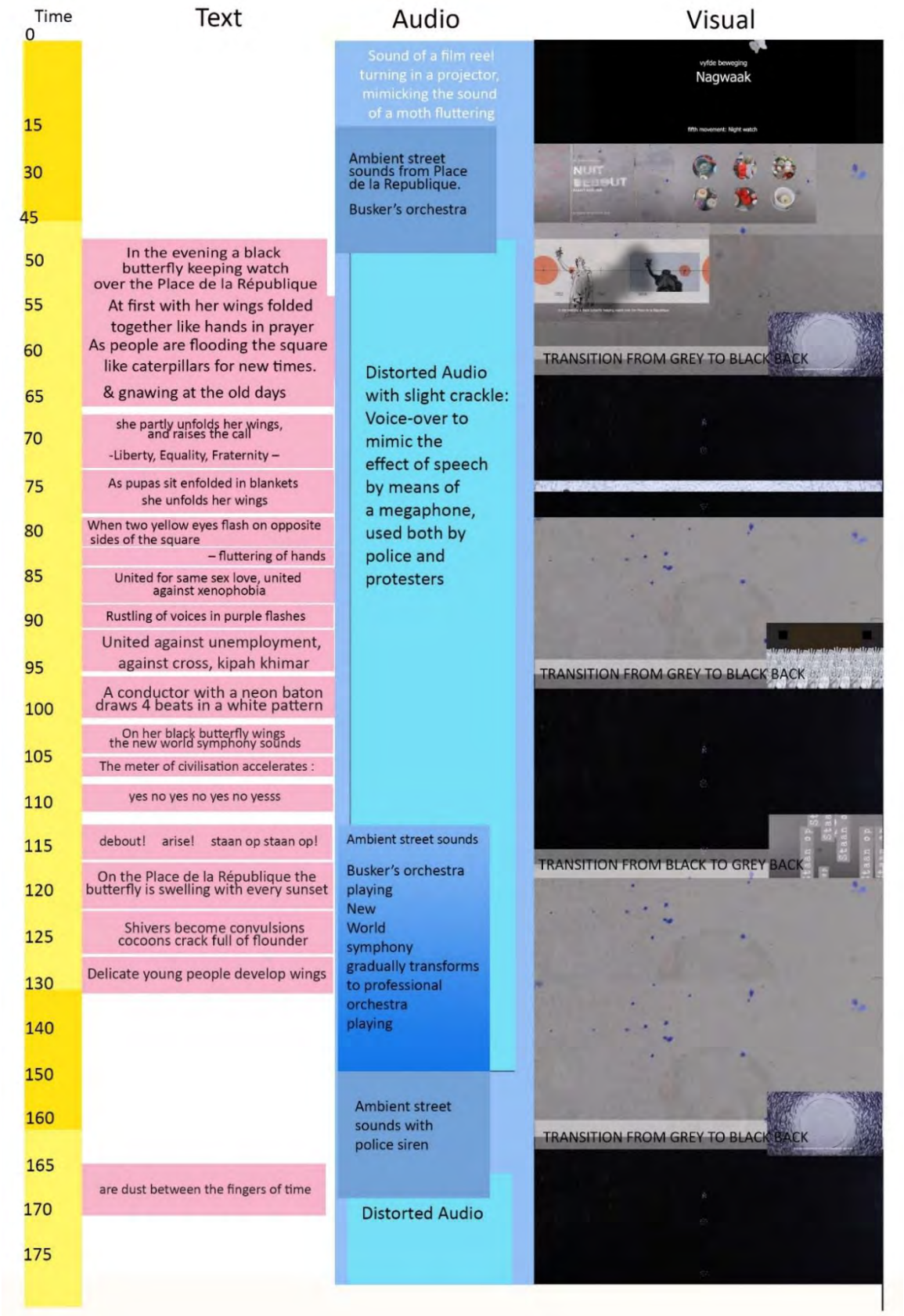


Figure 64. Schematic representation of the structural approach for Movement 5: nagwaak.

In Figure 65, the degree of technical complexity involved in constructing Movement 5: nagwaak can be seen. Every coloured bar represents a visual element (each itself of varying complexity) from a database of constructed and filmed footage.

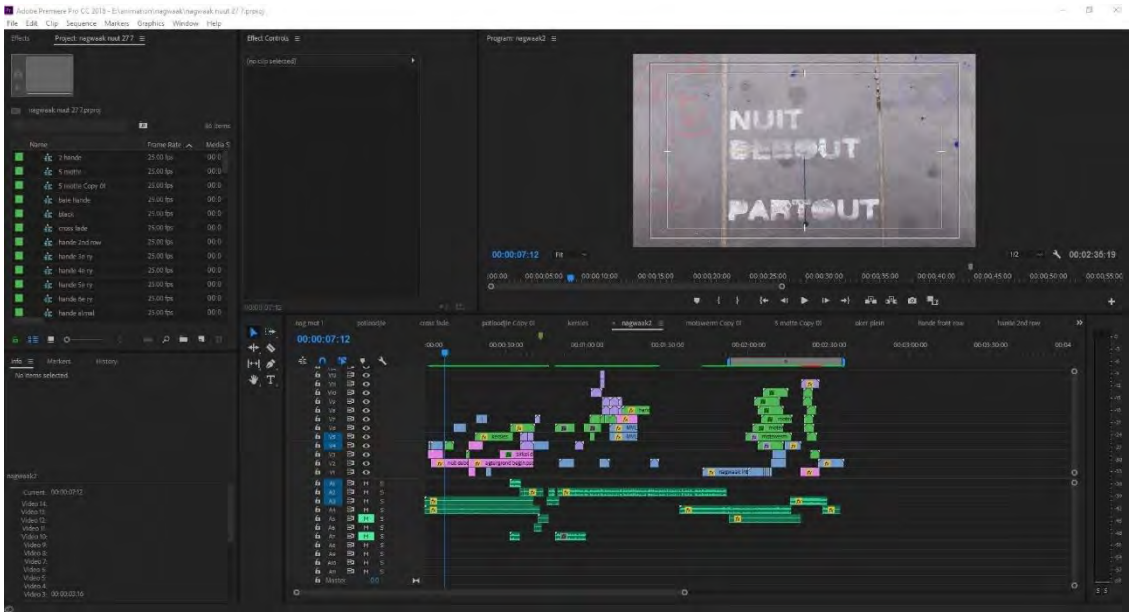


Figure 65. Screenshot of the editing timeline for Movement 5: nagwaak in Adobe Premiere (editing software), demonstrating the intensity of layering of visual imagery in some sections of the film.

6.3.6.4 Sound and music

The sound design of the film is fairly simple, as is evident in the diagram above (Figure 64). The sound design consists of four basic elements:

a. Moth sound: The sound of a film turning on its reel at the end of a screening is used to represent the wingbeats of the small moth at the beginning and throughout the film. The end of the film is loose and keep making a gentle flapping noise as the reel continues turning.
b. Ambient sound recorded on location: Various ambient sounds were recorded on the Place de la République in 2016 at the time on the #NuitDebout protests. The audio clips include general crowd noise from the protests, police sirens, a street orchestra practising and eventually performing the *New World Symphony* (Dvořák, Symphony No. 9).
c. Music: This comprises a short section of a professional recording of Dvořák, Symphony No. 9.
d. Voiceover of the text of the poem. Audio filters were added to the sound clip to give it the semblance of being spoken through a megaphone, or some public address

system as a way of connecting the voice to the protest action that is the theme of the poem.

In Figure 64, the placement of sound within the timeline is demonstrated as it relates to the placement of voice track and visual material. Specific tropes introduced during *Parys suite* are used to reference their earlier use and create unity through repetition in the film.

The first trope is the repetition of a small sound to suggest small repetitive movements or gestures. The soundtrack to Movement 5: nagwaak starts with a fluttering sound to represent the moth motif throughout the film[22] and references the fluttering of sparrow wings in Movement 1: Piaf, and elements of the soundtracks of both Movements 2: Parys in sirkels and Movement 4: Gebaretaal.

The second trope is that of the instrumental preparation to perform. The trope is first found at the very beginning of *Parys suite* in the soprano's rehearsal of scales during the prelude and reappears at the beginning of Movement 3: Amon L'isa as the orchestra is tuned before launching into the *Infernal galop*. Here the trope is found in the ambient protest sounds of the busker's orchestra rehearsing at the outset of Movement 5: nagwaak, to return later in the movement to play the first bars of the *New World Symphon*y as the voiced poem calls the protesters to action (sound-clip: https://youtu.be/NVnUkqzpHsg). The buskers' rendition then melds almost seamlessly into few bars of a professional recording of the symphony (sound clip: https://youtu.be/2JGpjchlUQY).

The third trope is that of music interrupted. Music is never completed or presented as a conventional emotional signifier, never merely sets the mood, and is never allowed to fade away quietly. The abrupt interruption itself carries meaning. In Movement 5: nagwaak, the music is cut by a police siren as a moth is brutally squashed by the hour hand of a clock (Figure 56, centre right panel), at which instant the soundtrack returns abruptly to ambient sound from the protest.

---

[22] Although at times is barely audible, the moth motif persists throughout the soundtrack to the point where the moth is squashed by the hour hand of the clock. Early in the film the moth motif corresponds to the rhythm of the circular flickerfilms of votive candles.

A structural event of importance in the film concerns the mid-sentence disruption of the last line of the poem. The voiced text and visual spectacle are merged with the application of sound and music. Text and sound are used in unison to reach a climax as the orchestra reaches a triumphant high as the voice states “Delicate young people develop wings”, which is the first half of the last line. During the next 20 seconds, the visual narrative entails a swarm of moths flying across the screen to triumphant music (Figure 56, centre panel) to the moth (and the protest) being squashed followed by a barrage of metaphorical imagery, and a confusion of sound. This section of audio-visual narrative profoundly influences how the conclusion of the poem is understood. This interruption of the poet’s flow of words sets the last poignant phrase apart and represents the animator’s reading of the social situation, and therefore of the poem itself. It is in this interruption that the voice of the animator and the voice of the poet lose synchronisation. The interruption in the flow of words changes the meaning of the last phrase from the poet’s European perception of protest action to the animator’s cynical reading (and depiction) of protest against the established and ingrained order as idealistic and ultimately futile.

6.3.7 Postlude

(Video link: https://youtu.be/PbG4JKpDd34)

The postlude consists of a time-lapse sequence filmed on a platform at the Concorde station of the Paris Métro. The camera was positioned as far back against the station wall as physically possible to provide as wide a view of the platform as possible, and also to be out of danger of being trampled by passengers. The sequence was filmed with a GoPro action camera with a fixed lens and deep depth of field to cause a fish-eye lens effect prevalent in imagery with pertinent parallel lines. This scene has several parallel horizontal lines, namely the edge of the close platform, the edge of the far platform, the two lines of fluorescent lights, the lines of tiles on the station wall, among others. The camera was set to take one photograph every 5 seconds. Visually the postlude comprises the resulting unedited and unmanipulated footage.

There are three distinct levels of action. The levels are a foreground that is the platform on which the camera is set up, a middle-ground comprising the two train tracks, and as background the opposite platform. Due to its distance from the camera and the field of

vision afforded, the background action is the clearest[23] and the least disrupted by the condensation of time. Even though the action is sped up, the progress of a figure across the platform can be followed. By contrast, action in the foreground is more disjointed as figures are within the camera's view for a very short time if walking past and would often only appear in a single frame. In the middle ground, trains arrive and depart in a flurry of movement. Occasionally the viewer has a glimpse of what transpires there when the train stops and spills its contents onto the platform.

The walls of the station are covered with white tiles with blue lettering. The writing on the wall is an installation by Belgian artist Françoise Schein and consists of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man of 1789. All spaces between words and punctuation have been removed, making the content hard to decipher in the few minutes a traveller spends waiting on the platform between trains. The installation is loaded with metaphor, and its use as location for the postlude was a calculated choice as the artwork concludes a build-up of themes in the film.

The soundtrack of the postlude is a mixture of two sound clips recorded in Paris. The first sound clip warns passengers (tourists) against pickpockets on the train (sound-clip: https://youtu.be/3Et4s7noLFA) and can be heard at the beginning of the postlude before the screen fades up from black. This recording made on the metro, is repeated in French, English, German, and Japanese. The reason for the use of the clip is very specific in contrast with Movement 5: nagwaak that ended on a fairly sombre, existentially bleak note. When the soundtrack of the postlude fades up over a black screen, the viewer is returned to the mundane with the very practical instruction of 'taking care of yourself and your belongings as you travel on public transport'. As the visuals fade up, the second sound clip is layered over the first to read as an extension of the first clip. The recording is of a street musician singing to the accompaniment of a barrel organ and recorded with the rather basic sound function of a digital camera (sound-clip: https://youtu.be/N71rYUpYLFE). The ambient street noise in the recording corresponds sufficiently to the ambience of the metro station (save for the absence of diegetic sound

[23] The footage was shot with a GoPro action camera which has a fixed deep depth of field. This fixed depth of field means that the focusing range has an extended reach – in this case both fore, middle and background are in perfect focus.

to the arrival and departure of trains) creating the impression that the busker might also be present on the station platform.

The song sung, even though it is fairly inaccessible to the average viewer (being in French slang), is significant nevertheless. The song was written by libertarian poet and songwriter Gaston Couté (1880–1911) and is called *Avec un air de reproche* (With an air of reproach). Despite the merry tune, the song addresses the unattainability of happiness or gratification.[24]

The use of this song to conclude the film is an instance of second-level musical cliché (Deutsch 2007:7). The barrel-organ sound and singing in French are deliberately chosen to tap into romanticised conceptions the audience might have of Paris. The sound positions the viewer geographically and emotionally. However, the song is fairly unfamiliar. The romantic familiarity of the barrel-organ sound is juxtaposed with the meaning of the song's words, and the text on the walls of the metro station. Both the song text and the altered Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man of 1789 on the walls can be considered to be 'invisible content' in the film. The viewer requires a certain amount of information about the city and the language to fully comprehend the irony presented by these two elements in the film. The comprehension is not essential for a satisfactory viewing of this part of the film. It is merely 'added value' that sharpens a cliché into a probe.

The postlude is also used as a credit sequence. The credits appear in a small white font at the bottom of the screen. Although running credits could have been effective in the sense of echoing the movement in the image, statics credits are used because they are easier to read.

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the sense of experimentation resulting from the lack of adherence to prescribed formulas around animation production and existing conceptions of poetry-

---

[24] Gaston Couté's *Avec un air de reproche* (With an air of reproach) https://www.barouline.org/paroles-de-chansons/gaston-coute/sur-un-air-de-reproche.html?fbclid=IwAR3mg8S5NPUR6o1jk4G3K7eC_8NnJazPFPbLJt6Ax2c_jMaJIf6OosK69_w

film opened up new possibilities and challenges on both technical and conceptual levels. The way editing was explored as a creative production process within each of the individual movements was demonstrated by explaining how and why specific relationships between text, visuals, and sounds were established. The exploration revealed how three signifying systems contribute to the making of meaning.

The application of visual material and sound in the animated poetry-film is comparable to how content and meaning is structured in the poem and communicated through language. Both visual material and sound can be applied as a semiotic system. Every aspect of visual or sound imparts meaning through the characteristics assigned to the visual or sound unit, and how the characteristics are applied. A complex intermedial relationship exists between the visual, aural, and textual aspects of the animated poetry-film. The visual, aural, and textual structures intersect and support each other to form a kine-icon.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

I started this study with a rather cynical quote by Maclennan in which she questions the uniqueness of a poetry and film hybrid, asking whether the poetry-film really exist. The purpose of this study was not to answer that question, even though an answer to it might have been a side-effect. The purpose of the question was to draw attention to the uneasy relationship between theory and praxis in the arts. The question asks if, *theoretically speaking*, poetry-film[1] exists. The Zebra Poetry Film Festival (2020), which is the oldest and largest festival dedicated to poetry-film, reports having received almost 2000 entries for its annual festival, suggesting that the poetry-film exists. Those 2000 entries hardly need theoretical justification. A more pertinent question would be 'How does poetry-film exist?' which would cover its reason for being, its process of coming into existence and how it is perceived. In this study I attempted to answer this question from my point of praxis as an artist making animated poetry-film.

The question of poetry-film that Maclennan poses is complicated by the demands of categorisation, as is any other question regarding poetry-films' form, authorship or the discipline to which it belongs. Neither 'poetry' nor 'animation' is a term that can be defined easily in terms of what they constitute, as the parameters of both are in flux. The terms can often not even be succinctly defined by what they are not. The evasive ASIFA[2] definition of animation as "the creation of moving images through the manipulation of all varieties of techniques apart from live-action methods" (ASIFA [Sa]) is becoming increasingly vague as technology advances, and poetry has lost clear delineation during the twentieth century to the point where it can barely be defined as 'not prose'. Bendazzi's (2008:[sp]) definition of animation, though equally vague, might be the most helpful - animation is "everything that people have called animation in the different historical periods". Much the same could be said for poetry because poetry is everything that people have called poetry in the various historical periods. This kind of definition is not of much use from a theoretical point of view. However, in terms of praxis the fluidity of the definition affords the maker the liberty of not being bogged down by definitions for the sake of authentication, and to get on with making.

---

1 There are a plethora of terms made of combinations of the words 'poem' and 'film'.

2 Association Internationale du Film d'Animation (ASIFA) – English translation: International Animated Film Association (ASIFA).

Bendazzi's definition places the responsibility of defining on the practitioners of the art, instead of with its theorists. "Everything that people have called animation in the different historical periods" leaves room for future developments in animation, while leaving the history of it in peace. Taking Bendazzi's definition as a template for defining creative activity, poetry-film indeed exists and can be defined as everything that people have called poetry-film in the various historical periods. If a filmmaker puts a poem to film, then a poetry-film exists.[3] However, the existence of poetry-film was not my hypothesis to prove. My task was to show the possible ways in which such an artefact could be most effectively constructed by an animator.

I suggested animation as the best medium for the creation of poetry-film for two main reasons. Firstly, the medium-specific abilities of animation as a medium of moving-image production and narration, and secondly the existence of certain similarities between animation and poetry in terms of rhythm and economy of expression. Poetry uses an abstraction of language to build meaning through its manipulation of the form of language, literally creating meaning by not conforming to the rules of accepted grammar. It subverts the process of meaning-making by intentionally using incorrect or awkward language, in the process arriving at a more expressive and acute mode of communication. Animation similarly abstracts reality using the peculiarities of its visual representation, and its manipulation of time and movement. Animation makes sense of the real world by distorting it in a similar way in which poetry, through the distortion of language penetrates surface appearances to reveal inner truths.

I proposed two narrative strategies as ideal for animated poetry-film, with 'narrative strategy' understood to refer to a structured way in which narrative techniques and devices are applied to communicate a set of concepts – a 'story'. Both are strategies that I found useful and effective from my specific perspective as critical practitioner and were selected for their specific suitability to the specific poetic texts and circumstances of production.

---

[3] No value judgement is made here regarding poetry, animation, poetry-film, or animated poetry-film. A bad poem (or film or animation) is still a poem (or film or animation) if the poet says it is. The abundance of 'bad' work out in the world is in part to be credited with this study being undertaken. The challenge of making value judgements on the quality of artworks should be left to theory, which must do so by means of its own attributes.

Despite the poetic texts in the films being authored by poets other than the animator, the animator is the narrator in the animated poetry-film, using the voice of the poet. As inspirational source of the film, the poem is part of the content to be narrated. The content includes the identity of the poet, and the animator uses the poet's voice as an essential narrative device. Through the narrative strategy the animator configures how three aspects of a concept influence each other to narrate, namely the rhetorical competence of the narrator (narrative modality), the range and nature of the visual imagery available with which to narrate (narrative world picture) and the content to be narrated (narrative intrigue). The rhetorical competence of the narrator is reflected in the extent of authoring done by the animator, and the effectivity of such authoring in reflecting the core of the source material – the poem. The narrative world picture refers to the style employed by the animator, the method of animation, the range and nature of the visual imagery, and its symbolic and metaphoric implications: The synchronic and the diachronic inscription as described by Burn and Parker (2001). The narrative intrigue pertains to the successful combination of the narrative modality and the narrative world picture; how the 'story' is told, and the narrative strategy followed to elicit effective narration to communicate optimally.

Metamorphosis has been demonstrated to be an inherent characteristic of animation, as it underlies many of its processes. In *Mon Pays,* two instances of metamorphosis between mediums were observed. The first transition the poem underwent was a metamorphosis from written text into the song that functions as a soundtrack to the film. The second transformation entails the metamorphosis from a literary text to poetry-film. In terms of constructing the film, metamorphosis was argued to be a process of making. Metamorphosis is the transformative activation that the animator exerts on physical media that results in the film coming into existence. Metamorphosis refers to the process of transformation that the created image, as an object, endlessly endured. Metamorphosis is also the process by which figures within that image transform from one thing into another. Furthermore, metamorphosis was argued to be a means of structuring, an editing tool by which the cutting of sequences is avoided by relying on the plasmaticity of the image to evolve physically from scene to scene. In this sense metamorphosis is used as a means of advancing the narrative. In *Mon Pays* the viewer is presented with a single picture plane that starts evolving from the first frame.

The visual narrative is driven by the constant transformation to which this surface is subjected, evolving from a blank surface into a picture plane and into a depicted world.

Metamorphosis is a process of conceptualisation via stream of consciousness and free association, relying on the inherent plasmaticness of the animated world where everything can transform into anything. This plasmaticness is significant in terms of visual communication in the animated poetry-film. It is a visual way to make propositions, link disparate ideas, and clarify or emphasise metaphors. The reliance on the immediacy of the process of image making, the performative nature of intuitive animation, and an open script suits the nature of the lyrical, suggestive, and ultimately vague poetic text of *Mon Pays*. Like the poem, the film leaves the viewer in a possibly perplexed state as to the meaning of it all, forcing the viewer into participating in the meaning-making process. The process of looking and comprehending becomes a process of metamorphosis where the 'message' is understood not to have a fixed form.

The very nature of animation as a practical activity of constructing a film frame by frame puts editing at the very heart of the process. The animator edits in the invisible interstices between frames, to paraphrase McLaren. I would extend Deren's view of editing to animation – animation is one of the primary devices of signification available to the film artist because animation requires editing between every sequential frame.

Sequential relationships between frames define animation. This sequential relationship becomes suddenly apparent when such relationships are disrupted. The disruption of sequential relationships is a specific purpose of disrupted-image animation techniques. Because of the refusal of these techniques to mimic reality, their explicit avoidance of smooth movement, their insistence on challenging the conventional concepts of spectatorship, they have increased potential to create meaning as a visual semiotic system. A freedom from realism, or at least the impulse towards realism, gives this type of animation the potential to make propositions in a manner similar to that of language. From a database filmmaking approach, the editing process supplies the animator with a database of phonemes, morphemes, lexemes, syntax, and context from which to construct a visual language that is poetic in its own right. From this point of view, editing becomes a process of authoring, as meaning is constructed through how the animator applies and manipulates the visual phonemes, morphemes, and lexemes. Cinematic meaning-making and linguistic meaning making possess similar features that are

adjusted to fit each medium's primary mode of address. Visual images possess both an expression and content plane for meaning making that should be factored in for its contribution to meaning making in text. This contribution of the expression and content planes is especially pertinent in a medium where text and visual imagery function together within a shared timeline, as is the case in poetry-film. Both text and imagery impart meaning on equal footing, with text not functioning in a supportive role as dialogue nor imagery functioning merely as illustration.

The poem is written from the personal context of the poet and read within the personal context of the reader, both of whom provide specific personal meaning. The film must be placed into a context that is sympathetic to both the personal contexts of poet and reader for the viewing of the poetry-film to be a personal experience. To this end the animator processes the poem for visual consumption. Following the process of analyses the animator further authors through conceptual construction, devising a screenplay for a film in which literary concepts are reconceptualised visually and communicated using visual narrative strategies. In practical terms, the animator has to author the universe of the film determining its appearance through a design process.

Apart from editing as an authorial activity, multiple instances of authoring occur as both physical and conceptualising activities are required as part of the production process. All of these instances of authoring are performed by the animator. If weighed in purely economic terms of time spent on the creation of the artefact, the animator's authoring might outweigh the authorship of the poet.

The animator devises a kine-iconic system consisting of a lexicon and a grammar. The lexicon consists of a set of images – some of which might be signs with universal significance and some of which might be specific and particular to a film. The grammar is a spatiotemporal grammatical system of the moving image. The system refers to how space is designed in a single frame of an animated film, and how time is designed by creating representations of movement and structures of duration.

I have successfully tested two narrative strategies in relation to specific texts in this study, namely metamorphosis and editing. Other narrative strategies could be successfully applied to these same texts resulting in wildly different poetry-films. Theoretically, it is possible to suggest a model for making an animated poetry-film.

Making animated poetry-film could be taught. However, the success of every individual film would rely on the tacit knowledge of the animator. In Chapter 4, I suggested guidelines for the informed selection of a suitable poetry text. Propositional knowledge regarding production processes, and methodical instructions with regard to animation methods can be compiled. Explicit knowledge can explain how making an animated poetry-film should be approached theoretically, and to some extent the reasoning can be arrived at by some conceptual and creative processes. Tacit knowledge has an explicit dimension, and can be made explicit to some extent through explanation and description, and can thus be transferred. This transfer of knowledge does not necessarily mean that such knowledge will be useful. The knowledge transference can only be achieved by internalising the explicit knowledge within a relationship of mentoring or coaching between the expert and the learner. Internalisation requires learning by doing, observing and reflecting. The process will always be individual and personal as any set of non-empirical knowledge or information has an infinite variety of possible interpretations. With any creative process, every situation is a new situation and every artwork is experimental by definition.

More than a single author is involved in the creation of an animated poetry-film, and the animator is the primary author from my point of view. Likewise, many internal artistic 'voices' are involved when the animator makes the poetry-film, only one of which is the analytic voice needed throughout this thesis to lay bare the intuitive thoughts and processes for the sake of a study, which can be qualified as research. The creative process relies on indefinable or unquantifiable notions like 'inspiration', 'hunch', 'imagination', or 'individuality' – the voices the animator listens to in the moment of creation. These voices and how they manifest in the artwork has a direct bearing upon the capacity of the artwork to touch the viewer in some sensuous and poetic manner.

In this study, I aimed to expand the practice of narrative strategies in the creation of animated poetry-films by exploring how animation can be applied to tell fragmented, non-linear narratives. During the course of my research, many related topics presented themselves for consideration, some of which insisted on being included in this thesis. Various of these themes warrant further research:

Narrative strategies in animated poetry-film leave room for further academic exploration, as this thesis explored only two of an infinite number of possibilities. The making of poetry-film is an educational process in the teaching of literature. As a topic for research, poetry-film has a very direct real-world application. This thesis could be of some value for teaching and could be expanded and simplified into a more specifically instructional format.

The issue of authorship of the poetry-film as explored in this study poses the animator as the primary author of the film, with 'secondary' authors – the poet, and the composer of the soundtrack, among others. Research projects where the issue of co-authorship between animator, writer, and composer are deliberately explored could be revelatory in terms of themes like artistic co-operation, the nature and functioning of the artistic process, and artistic cross-pollination.

The notion of metalepsis as a fundamental aspect of animation poses various possibilities for research. How the animator is made visible – or invisible – in the style and execution of the animated film impacts the concept of authorship, distinguishing the auteur filmmaker from the notion of 'studio as auteur'. Also, current technological developments in terms of virtual reality and its impact on viewing film and animation make the crossing of metaleptical borders in narrative a necessary topic of research.

I refrained from offering a concise definition for poetry-film at the beginning of this study, and maintain that position. Poetry-film is simply a hybrid art form combining poetry with cinema in any way a poet and filmmaker find the most effective way to communicate with the viewer. I have shown that animation possesses unique means of filmic expression that are quite different from real-time live footage. This unique expressiveness makes animation a particularly well-suited medium for poetry-film.

Bibliography

Albright, D. 2014. Panaesthetics: on the unity and diversity of the arts , in *Anthony Hecht lectures in the humanities.*,. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Anderson, J & Anderson, B. 1993. The myth of persistence of vision. *Journal of Film and Video* 45(1):3–12. Available from: http://www.jstor.org/stable/20687993 (Accessed September 2019).

Anderson, J & Fisher, B. 1978. The myth of persistence of vision. *Journal of the University Film Association* 30(4):3–8. Available from: http://www.jstor.org/stable/20687445 (Accessed October 2019).

Andrews, H. 2013. Recitation, quotation, interpretation: adapting the ouevre in poet biopics. *Adaptation* 6(3):365–383.

Arnheim, R. 1957. *Film as art*. London: University of California Press.

ASIFA. [Sa]. *International animated film association*. Available from: http://www.asifa.net/statutes (Accessed 5 September 2018).

Avram, H. 2013. In between frames 2.0: time, image and remediation in photography and video art (two case studies) Ekphrasis. *Images, Cinema, Theatre, Media* 10(2):2013.

Barthes, R. 1967. *The death of the author*. Available from: http://www.tbook.constantvzw.org/wp-content/death_authorbarthes.pdf.

Barthes, R & Duisit, L. 1975. An introduction to the structural analysis of narrative. *New Literary History* 6(2):237–272. doi.org/10.2307/468419.

Bazin, A. 1967. *What is cinema, vol 1*. 1st ed. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Beauchamp, R. 2005. *Designing sound for animation*. Burlington: Focal Press.

De Beer, A. 2014. We'll have a gay ol' time: transgressive sexuality and sexual taboo in adult television animation. Doctoral thesis, University of Cape Town.

Bendazzi, G. 2008. Defining animation: a proposal. *Japanese Journal of Animation Studies* 9(1):67–71. Available from: http://ci.nii.ac.jp/naid/40016292666/.

Bendazzi, G. 2016. *Animation: a world history, vol 3*. Boca Raton: CRC Press.

Borgdorff, H. 2010. *The debate on research in the arts*. Available from: https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-debate-on-research-in-the-Arts-Borgdorff/a9bc42eb543b223438a25954e22bc168e8212a32 (Accessed 13 August 2020).

Bowers, J. 2018. *Staff pick premiere: 9 ways to draw a person*. Available from: https://vimeo.com/blog/post/staff-pick-premiere-9-ways-to-draw-a-person/ (Accessed 8 May 2019).

Brock, R. 2015. Intuition and insight: two concepts that illuminate the tacit in science education. *Studies in Science Education* 51(2):127–167.

doi.org/https://www.tandfonline.com/action/showCitFormats?doi=10.1080/03057267.2015.1049843.

Brook, D. 2012. Experimental art. *Studies in Material Thinking* 8(12):1–6. Available from: http://www.materialthinking.org.

Buchan, S. 2007. The animated fulcrum , in *Animated painting*, edited by B.-S. Hertz. 1st ed. San Diego. 144.

Buchan, S. 2012. Theatrical cartoon comedy: from animated portmanteau to the risus purus , in *A companion to film comedy*, edited by A. Horton & J. Rapf. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell.

Buchan, S. 2013. Theatrical cartoon comedy: from animated portmanteau to the risus purus , in *A companion to film comedy*, edited by A. Horton & J. Rapf. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. 568.

Buchan, S. 2020. Pervasive, disruptive and useful animation , in *Art in the 21st century: reflections and provocations*, edited by S. Zielinski & C. Merewether. Hong Kong: Osage. 112–124.

Buchanan, A. 2016a. Plasmatic: improvising animated metamorphosis. Doctoral thesis, RMIT University.

Buchanan, A. 2016b. Hypothesis, falsification and repeatability: reflections on 'the experiment' in experimental animation. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/people/search?utf8=✓&q=Hypothesis%2C+falsification+and+repeatability%3A+reflections+on+'the+experiment'+in+experimental+animation.

Buchanan, A. [Sa]. *Can animated metamorphosis represent the stream of consciousness? The fluid aesthetics of plasmatic no. 1, no. 2 and no. 3*. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/28932108/ (Accessed 23 June 2019).

Buck, L. 2016. *William Kentridge: an animated life*. Available from: https://www.theartnewspaper.com/feature/william-kentridge-an-animated-life (Accessed 11 November 2019).

Burn, A & Parker, D. 2001. Making your mark: digital inscription, animation, and a new visual semiotic. *Education, Communication & Information* 1(2):155–179. doi.org/10.1080/14636310126888.

Bush, P. 2004. *While Darwin sleeps*. United Kingdom: LUX. Available from: http://www.paulbushfilms.com/while-darwin-sleeps-movie.html.

Callus, P. 2015. Animation, fabrication, photography: reflections upon the intersecting practices of sub-Saharan artists within the moving image. *African Arts* 48(3):58–70.

Cannon, R & Hubley, J. 1950. *Gerald McBoing-Boing*. United States of America: Columbia Pictures. Available from: https://boingboing.net/2016/12/28/watch-gerald-mcboing-boing-th.html.

Carbone, K. 2010. *Stone-age animation in a digital world: William Kentridge at MoMA*. Available from: https://www.fastcompany.com/1561390/stone-age-animation-digital-world-william-kentridge-moma (Accessed 11 November 2019).

Carroll, N. 1996. *Theorizing the moving image*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available from: https://www.scribd.com/document/340195632/0521460492-pdf.

Catani, R. 2002. *La funambola*. Italy. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpFAajGurxI.

Chaudhuri, S. 2006. *Feminist film theorists*. New York: Routledge. Available from: https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/40562283/Routledge_Critical_Thinkers_Shohini_Chaudhuri-Feminist_Film_Theorists-Routledge2006.pdf?1449036880=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DRoutledge_Critical_Thinkers_Shohini_Chau.pdf&Expires=15994.

Chion, M. 1994. *Audio-vision: sound on screen*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Cholodenko, A. 2005. Still photography? *Afterimage* 32(5):5–7. Available from: https://0-search-proquest-com.oasis.unisa.ac.za/docview/212122742/AC5EFF7062ED4F12PQ/8?accountid=14648.

Çöl, D. 2018. A phenomenological approach to the film editing practice: legacy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Master's thesis, Kadir Has University. Available from: http://academicrepository.khas.edu.tr/bitstream/handle/20.500.12469/2685/A phenomenological approach to the film editing practice Legacy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

Colman, F. 2011. *Deleuze and cinema*. 1st ed. Oxford: Berg.

Conley, K. 2006. Surrealism and outsider art: from the "automatic message" to André Breton's collection. *Yale French Studies* (109):129–143. Available from: https://www.jstor.org/stable/4149290.

Conrad, T. 1966. *The flicker*. France: RE:VOIR. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yY5VryfCRig.

Cook, A. 2010. *The filming of poetry*. Available from: http://discussion.movingpoems.com/2011/03/the-filming-of-poetry/ (Accessed 1 April 2018).

Cook, A. 2017. *Filmpoem*. Available from: http://filmpoem.com/about/ (Accessed 1 April 2018).

Corrigan, T (ed.). 2012. *Film and literature: an introduction and reader*. New York: Routledge.

Coyle, RJFPH. 2013. Subtle idiosyncracy - sound and music in the Australian animated short film: The Lost Thing (2010). *Screen Sound: Australasian Journal of Soundtrack Studies* 444–57. Available from: http://www.screensoundjournal.org/issues/n4/08. SSJ

n4 Coyle et al.pdf.

Dan Torre. 2014. Cognitive animation theory: a process-based reading of animation and human cognition. *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 9(1):47–64.

Dawson, A. 2018. *Cornelia Parker captures dystopian political era in new works for UK's snap election*. Available from: https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/cornelia-parker-captures-dystopian-political-era-in-new-works-for-uk-s-2017-snap-election%7B%7D (Accessed 6 May 2019).

Deleuze, G. 1985. *Cinema2: the time-image*. 5th ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Denslow, P. 1998. What is animation and who needs to know? , in *A reader in animation studies*, edited by J. Pilling. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Available from: Project.

Deutsch, S. 2007. The soundtrack: putting music in its place. *The Soundtrack* 1(1):3–13. doi.org/10.1386/st.1.1.3_2.

Dietrich, M. 1949. *Black market*. Available from: https://www.paroles-musique.com/eng/Marlene_Dietrich-Black_Market-lyrics,p0533183 (accessed 1 September 2020).

Dill, J. 2017. Philosophy of experimental animation: drawing the art historical line , in *Society for Animation Studies Conference*,. Padua.

Dillon, GL. 2006. Corpus, creativity, cliché: where statistics meet aesthetics. *Journal of Literary Semantics* 35(2):97–103. doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1515/JLS.2006.005.

Dudok de Wit, M. 2006. *The aroma of tea*. Netherlands/United Kingdom: SND Films. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TewvScBiBn4.

Eades, C & Papazian, E. 2016. *The essay film: dialogue/politics/utopia*. London: Wallflower Press.

Eijsbouts, AE. 2017. *Hate for sale*. The Netherlands: visible poetry projects. Available from: https://vimeo.com/215445656.

Eijsbouts, AE. 2020. *Correspondence*. Amsterdam.

Eisenstein, S. 1988. *S.M. Eisenstein: selected works vol 1: writings, 1922-34*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Available from: https://books.google.com.tr/books/about/Writings_1922_1934.html?id=M3QBAwAAQBAJ&pgis=1.

Elleström Lars. 2010. The modalities of media: a model for understanding intermedial relations , in *Media borders, multimodality and intermediality*, edited by L. Elleström. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 11–50. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/3126014/The_modalities_of_media_A_model_for_understanding_intermedial_relations?auto=bookmark.

Endarto, IT. 2017. *Systemic functional linguistics: a brief introduction*. Yogyakarta. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/34037346/Systemic_Functional_Linguistics_A_Brief_Introduction.

Fei, V. 2007. The visual semantics stratum: making meaning in sequential images , in *New directions in the analysis of multimodal discourse*, edited by T.D. Royce & W. Bowcher. 1st ed. New York: Routledge. doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203357774.

Feyersinger, E. 2010. Diegetic short circuits: metalepsis in animation. *An Interdisciplinary Journal* 5(3):279–294.

Fischer, L. 1999. Film editing , in *A companion to film theory*, edited by T. Miller & R. Stam. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Fleischer, D. 1922. *Out of the inkwell: the Dresden Doll*. United States of America: Undercrank Productions. Available from: https://youtu.be/MXP0Izior1g.

Fosse, B. 1972. *Cabaret*. United States of America. Available from: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0068327/.

Frank, H. 2019. Animation and montage; or, photographic records of documents , in *Frame by frame: a materialist aesthetics of animated cartoons*, edited by D. Morgan. 1st ed. Berkeley: University of California Press. 13–43. doi.org/10.1525/luminos.65.b.

Fried, J. 2016. *Mind frame*. United States of America: Vimeo. Available from: https://vimeo.com/183257013.

Furniss, M. 1998. *Art in motion animation aesthetics*. Sydney: John Libbey.

Furniss, M. 2007. *Art in motion, animation aesthetics*. Revised ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Furniss, M. 2008. *The animation bible*. 1st ed. New York: Abrams.

Furuhata, Y. 2011. Rethinking plasticity: the politics and production of the animated image. *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 6(1):25–38. Available from: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1746847710391226.

Gaal-Holmes, P. 2019. Process & temporality: chance & (al)chemical traces invigorating materiality & content in the films of Péter Forgács, Penny Siopis and Ben Rivers Rivers. *International Journal of Film and Media Arts* 4(2):68–79. doi.org/10.24140/ijfma.v4.n2.06.

Gallix, A. 2010. *In theory: the death of the author*. Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2010/jan/13/death-of-the-author (Accessed 29 November 2019).

Gasek, T. 2012. *Frame by frame stop motion nontraditional approaches to stop motion animation*. 1st ed. New York: Routledge. Available from: https://doi.org/10.4324/9780240817293.

Genette, G. 1988. *Narrative discourse revisited*. Ithaca: Cornell UP.

Gilbert, R. 2018. Mind the gap: considering the practice of animation as a form of applied philosophy. *Animation Studies 2.0* 2. Available from: https://blog.animationstudies.org/?p=2753 (Accessed 20 January 2019).

Glennie, J. 2019. Flicker film and the videopoem , in *Poetryfilm Magazine*, edited by A. Helmcke & G. Naschert. Weimar. 19–21.

Gnyp, M. 2017. *William Kentridge*. Available from: https://www.martagnyp.com/interviews/william-kentridge.php (Accessed 9 November 2019).

Gordeeff, E. 2018. *Aesthetic interferences: the stop-motion technique in animation narrative*. Lisbon: Booksfactory.

Greenberg, R. 2011. The animated text: definition. *Journal of Film and Video* 63(2):3–10.

Grobler, D. 2014. *Filmverse*. South Africa: ATKV.

Grobler, D. 2016. *Filmverse 2*. South Africa: ATKV.

Grobler, D. 2017. *Mon Pays*. South Africa: Cape Town Music Academy. Available from: https://vimeo.com/281670374.

Grobler, D. 2018. *Parys suite*. South Africa: Veldturksvytjie & kie.

Gunning, T. 2014. Animation and alienation: Bergson's critique of the cinématographe and the paradox of mechanical motion. *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 14(1):1–9. Available from: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/movingimage.14.1.0001.

Hamman, J & Hamman, W. 2016. *Stad in die mis*. South Africa: ATKV. Available from: https://vimeo.com/241656918.

Hardman, TJ. 2019. Understanding creative intuition – perspectives from eastern and western philosophy. Doctoral thesis, University of the Free State.

Harvor, F. 2017. New media and narrative: videopoetry and its combination of challenge to and co-existence with lyrical tradition. *Poetryfilm Live* . Available from: http://poetryfilmlive.com/new-media-and-narrative-videopoetry-and-its-combination-of-challenge-to-and-co-existence-with-lyrical-tradition/ (Accessed 20 April 2019).

Hebert, P. 2005. Cinema, animation and the other arts , in *The sharpest point: animation at the end of cinema*, edited by C. Gehman & S. Reinke. Toronto: YYZ Books.

Henson, J. 1986. *Labyrinth*. United States of America. Available from: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0091369/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1.

Huhn, P. 2005. Plotting the lyric: forms of narration in poetry. *Literator* 31(3):17–47.

Huhn, P & Sommer, R. 2013. *Narration in poetry and drama: the living handbook of*

narratology. Available from: http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/narration-poetry-and-drama.

Ieropoulos, F. 2010. The film poem. Doctoral thesis, University of the Creative Arts at Kent.

Ieropoulos, F. [Sa]. *Poetry-film & the film poem: some clarifications*. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/20849192/Poetry-Film_and_The_Film_Poem_Some_Clarifications.

Ieropoulos, F.[Sa]. *Film Poetry: A Historical Analysis*. <http://poetryfilmlive.com/film-poetrya-historical-analysis/>. (Accessed 4 December 2018).

Iser, W. 1972. The reading process: a phenomenological approach. *New Literary History* 3(2):279–299. Available from: http://www.jstor.org/stable/468316.

Ivins-Hulley, L. 2013. A universe of boundaries: pixilated performances in Jan Švankmajer's food. *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 8(3):267–282.

James, W. 1890. *The principles of psychology*. New York: Henry Holt and Company. Available from: https://ia600203.us.archive.org/12/items/theprinciplesofp01jameuoft/theprinciplesofp01jameuoft_bw.pdf.

Jeaks, G & Tetali, P. [Sa]. *Layout design for animation*. Available from: http://www.dsource.in/sites/default/files/course/layout-design-animation-part-i/downloads/file/layout-design-animation-part-i.pdf (Accessed 16 January 2020).

John Mullarkey. 2010. Gilles Deleuze , in *Film, theory and philosophy: the key thinkers*, edited by Felicity Colman. 1st ed. London: Acumen Press. 179–189. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/12377263/Gilles_Deleuze_and_Film.

Jones, TE. 2013. A method of search for reality: research and research degrees in art and design , in *Thinking through art*, edited by K. Macleod & L. Holdridge. Milton Park: Taylor & Francis.

Kawashima, K. 2019. Metamorphosis as origin—Koji Yamamura's short animation Franz Kafka's a country doctor. *Arts* 8(2):54. doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/arts8020054.

Kentridge, W. 1991. *Mine*. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8TpcdmCTHo (Accessed 16 March 2020).

Killander, C, C. Lutas, L & Strukelj, A. 2014. A new look on ekphrasis: an eye-tracking experiment on a cinematic example. *Ekphrasis* 210–31. Available from: http://ekphrasisjournal.ro/index.php?p=arch&id=64.

Kinloch, D. 2010. The poet in the art gallery: accounting for ekphrasis. *New Writing* 7(1):19–29. doi.org/10.1080/14790720903469854.

Konyves, T. 2012. *Address to the colloquium*. Abbotsford: University of the Fraser Valley.

Konyves, T. 2015. Redefining poetry in the age of the screen. *Poetryfilmkanal* . Available

from: http://gatomonodesign.de/wordpress/redefining-poetry-in-the-age-of-the-screen/ (Accessed 5 March 2019).

Konyves, T. 2017. A rumination on visual text in videopoetry. *Poetryfilmkanal* 2. Available from: http://gatomonodesign.de/wordpress/a-rumination-on-visual-text-in-videopoetry/.

Konyves, T. 2018. Talking points: terms of service, illustration, performance. *Poetryfilmkanal* 52019. Available from: http://gatomonodesign.de/wordpress/talking-points/ (Accessed 5 March 2019).

Konyves, T. 2019. *From the cinema of poetry to the poetry of cinema*. Available from: http://gatomonodesign.de/wordpress/from-the-cinema-of-poetry-to-the-poetry-of-cinema/?fbclid=IwAR33-3P5CDX-d1VSKDYbex6q73VVdsfCH-APRXc9RA42YlLKKMPSpPb4aTU (Accessed 1 June 2019).

Lavers, K. 2013. Weird, wired, mesmerizing momento mori: the animations of Jake Fried. *Weird Fiction Review* (Feb 12):5. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/32082843/Weird_Fiction_Review_Your_Non_Denominational_Source_for_The_Weird_Weird_Wired_Mesmerizing_Momento_Mori_The_Animations_of_Jake_Fried.

Layborne, K. 1998. *The animation book*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

Lessing, GE. 1887. *Laocoon: an essay upon the limits of painting and poetry*. Boston: Roberts Brothers. Available from: https://archive.org/details/laocoonessayupon00lessrich/page/n7.

Lindop, J. 2007. Eisenstein: 'intellectual montage', poststructuralism, and ideology. *Off-screen* 11(2):. Available from: https://offscreen.com/view/eisenstein_intellectual_montage_poststructuralism_and_ideology (Accessed 20 October 2019).

Lindvall, T & Melton, M. 1994. Toward a postmodern animated discourse: Bakhtin, intertexuality and the cartoon carnival. *Animation Journal* 3(1):44–64.

Lockwood, N, Simari, P, Coleman, P & Singh, K. 2007. DirectCam: a gestural system for animatic creation , in *Siggraph2007*,. Available from: https://www.cct.lsu.edu/~fharhad/ganbatte/siggraph2007/CD2/content/sketches/0397.pdf.

Maltz-Leca, L. 2013. Process/procession: William Kentridge and the process of change. *The Art Bulletin* 95(1):139–165.

Maltz-Leca, L. 2018. *William Kentridge: process as metaphor and other doubtful enterprises*. Oakland: University of California Press.

McFarlane, B. 2007. Reading film and literature , in *Cambridge companion to literature on screen*, edited by D. Cartmell & I. Whelehan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McLaren, N. 1952. *Neighbours*. Canada: National Film Board of Canada. Available from:

https://www.nfb.ca/playlists/mclaren/playback/#1.

Miailhe, F. 2016. *25, Passage des Oiseaux*. France. Available from: https://vimeo.com/409494023.

Mitchell, WJT. 2005. There are no visual media. *Journal of Visual Culture* 4(2):257–266. Available from: https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/vcua/4/2.

Moins, P. 2008. William Kentridge: quite the opposite of cartoons. *Animation World Magazine* 3(7):. Available from: https://www.awn.com/mag/issue3.7/3.7pages/3.7moinskentridge.html.

Moremoholo, TP. 2008. Can animation be used to improve comprehension of instructional text? *South African Journal of Higher Education* 22(6):1241–1248. Available from: https://journals.co.za/content/high/22/6/EJC37497.

Mulvey, L. 1975. Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. *Screen* 16(3):6–18. doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/16.3.6.

Neelon, C. 2015. Frame on frame: the hand-drawn animations of Jake Fried. *Juxtapoz* . Available from: https://www.juxtapoz.com/news/page/1/.

Niedderer, K & Imani, Y. 2008. Developing a framework for managing tacit knowledge in research using knowledge management models , in *Undisciplined! Proceedings of the Design Research Society Conference 2008.*, edited by D. Durling, C. Rust, L.-L. Chen, P. Ashton, & K. Friedman. Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University. 25. Available from: http://shura.shu.ac.uk/507/.

Olivier, B. 2017. *A stream of consciousness: art, consciousness, self-consciousness and the unconscious*. Available from: https://thoughtleader.co.za/bertolivier/2017/09/04/a-stream-of-consciousness-art-consciousness-self-consciousness-and-the-unconscious/ (Accessed 26 January 2020).

Onetti, M. 2017. *A brief critical analysis of appropriation and its digital resources.* Available from: https://artbox.digital/en/2017/re-appropriationisme-du-videoart/ (Accessed 24 July 2020).

Orme, TD. 2017. Opening the folds of time: animated films of accretion. *Asifa Magazine* 28(1):6–8.

Orphal, S. 2014. *Poesiefilm*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Orphal, S. 2015. The fascination of hearing poetry films. *Poetry Film Kanal* . Available from: http://gatomonodesign.de/wordpress/the-fascination-of-hearing-poetryfilms/.

Oxford English Dictionary. 2010. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*.

Parker, C. 2017a. *Election abstract*. United Kingdom. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFFUXXdlRqA.

Parker, C. 2017b. *Election abstract*. [Motion Picture] 3 minutes 9 seconds looped video with sound: Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art, chaired by Alison McGovern

MP. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFFUXXdlRqA (Accessed 20 March 2019).

Penn, R. 2009. Metamorphosis as narrative strategy in selected South African animated films. Master's thesis, School of Arts University of the Witwatersrand.

Phelan, J. 2004. Rhetorical literary ethics and lyric narrative: Robert Frost's '"Home burial"'. *Poetics Today* 25(4):627–651. Available from: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/65d3/a8d7027f79b10b85bc17d91b4c615b5ef90a.pdf.

Pier, J. 2016. Metalepsis , in *Living handbook of narratology*, edited by P. et al Hühn. Hamburg: Hamburg University. Available from: http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/metalepsis-revised-version-uploaded-13-july-2016.

Pikkov, U. 2010. *Animasophy: theoretical writings on the animated film*. 1st ed. Tallin: Estonian Academy of Arts.

Pikkov, U. 2018. *Anti-animation: textures of eastern European animated film*. 1st ed. Tallin: Estonian Academy of Arts.

Pikkov, Ü. 2009. *Gone with the wind*. Estonia. Available from: https://vimeo.com/15609709.

Pithouse-Morgan, K, Van Laren, L, Mitchell, C & Singh, S. 2015. Digital animation for "going public" on curriculum integration of HIV and AIDS in higher education. *South African Journal of Higher Education* 29(2):237–259. Available from: https://journals.co.za/content/high/29/2/EJC176169#metrics_content.

Poell, T. 2004. Movement and time in cinema , in *Discernements: Deleuzian aesthetics*, edited by E. al. J. Bloois. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 1–21. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/1243367/Movement_and_Time_in_Cinema.

"Poetry". [Sa]. , in *Merriam-Webster*,. Available from: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/poetry.

Polanyi, M. 1962. *Personal knowledge: towards a post-critical philosophy*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Rall, H. 2020. *Adaptation for animation: transforming literature frame by frame*. Boca Raton: CRC Press.

Rascaroli, L. 2008. The essay film: problems, definitions, textual commitments. *Framework: Journal of Cinema and Media* 49(2):24–47.

Reinhardt, J. [Sa]. *Gaze*. Available from: https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/gaze/ (Accessed 6 May 2020).

Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). 2005. *RAE2008 guidance on submissions*. Available from: http://www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2005/03/rae0305.pdf (Accessed 14 August 2020).

Riekeles, S & Lamarre, T. 2012. Image essay: mobile worldviews. *Mechademia: Second Arc* 7174–188.

Riffaterre, M. 1980. *Semiotics of poetry Indiana University Press*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Ryan, M. 2003. On the theoretical foundations of transmedial narratology , in *Narratology beyond literary criticism: mediality, disciplinarity*, edited by T. Meister J. Kind & W. Schernus. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Schwizgebel, G. 1998. *Fugue*. Switzerland. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FsIkLDP1Vk.

Sharits, P. 1968. *T,O,U,C,H,I,N,G [Moving Picture]*. United States of America: Fandor. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzRAB2MjSNA.

Sherman, T. 2005. Video/intermedia/animation , in *The sharpest point: animation at the end of cinema*, edited by C. Gehman & S. Reinke. Toronto: YYZ Books.

Sime, J. 1890. *Lessing*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench Trubner & Co.

Sitney, PA (ed.). 2000. Poetry and the film: a symposium , in *Film culture reader*,. 1st ed. New York: Cooper Square Press. 180-. Available from: https://monoskop.org/images/e/e0/Sitney_Adams_P_ed_Film_Culture_Reader_2nd_ed_2000.pdf.

Slowik, M. 2014. Telling 'what is': frame narrative in Zbig Rybczynski's 'Tango', Wendy Tilby and Amanda Forbis's 'When the day breaks', and Yuri Norstein's 'tale of tales'. *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 9(3):281–298. doi.org/10.1177/1746847714545938.

Solomon, M. 2006. Up-to-date magic: theatrical conjuring and the trick film. *Theatre Journal* 58(4):595–615. doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1353/tj.2007.0032.

Speranza, RS. 2002. Verses in the celluloid: poetry in film from 1910-2002, with special attention to the development of the film-poem. Doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield. Available from: http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/6018/.

Stam, R. 2000. *Film theory: an introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Svirsky, A. 2015. *9 ways to draw a person*. Russia: Nadezhda Svirskaia. Available from: https://vimeo.com/279353673.

Svirsky, A. 2020. *Correspondence*. Moscow.

Thomas, F & Johnston, O. 1994. *The illusion of life: Disney animation*. New York: Abbeville Press.

Tjupa, V. 2014. Narrative strategies , in *The living handbook of narratology*, edited by P. et al Hühn. Hamburg: Hamburg University. Available from: http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/narrative-strategies (Accessed 12 Febraury 2019).

Vanderbeek, S. 1961. The cinema delimina: films from the underground. *Film Quarterly* 14(4):5–15.

van der Walt, C. 2017. *Nagwaak (Vigil)*.

Ward, P. 2006. Some thoughts on theory practice relationships in animation studies. *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 1(2):229–245. Available from: http://anm.sagepub.com.

Wells, B. 2011. Frame of reference: toward a definition of animation. *Animation Practice, Process & Production* 1(1):11–32. doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1386/ap3.1.1.11_1.

Wells, P. 1998. *Understanding animation*. New York: Routledge.

Wells, P. 2002. *Animation: genre and authorship*. 1st ed. London: Wallflower Press.

Wells, P. 2007. Classic literature and animation: all adaptations are equal, but some are more equal than others , in *The Cambridge companion to literature on screen*, edited by D. Cartmell & I. Whelehan. Leicester: De Montfort University.

Wells, P & Hardstaff, J. 2008. *Re-imagining animation: the changing face of the moving image*. Lausanne: AVA Academia.

What is systemic-functional linguistics? [Sa]. Available from: http://www.isfla.org/Systemics/definition.html (Accessed 29 June 2020).

Wollen, P. 2012. The auteur theory , in *Film and literature: an introduction and reader*, edited by T. Corrigan. New York: Routledge. Available from: http://0-www.oed.com.oasis.unisa.ac.za/view/Entry/292033?redirectedFrom=time+lapse+.

Wood, C. 2015. *Jake Fried*. Available from: http://www.edgeofframe.co.uk/jake-fried-2/.

Yacavone, D. 2018. The expressive sign: cinesemiotics, enunciation and screen art , in *The anthem handbook of screen theory*, edited by H. Vaughan & T. Conley. London: Anthem Press. 245–262.

Zebra Poetry Film Festival. 2020. Available from: https://www.haus-fuer-poesie.org/en/zebra-poetry-film-festival/das-zebra-poetry-film-festival-berlin/about/ (Accessed 14 September 2020).

Zompetti, JP. 2017. The power of symbols: the ideological representations of a French revolution playing card deck, the revolutionnaires. *Inquiries Journal* 9(3):1–3. Available from: http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=1548.

Addendum 1. Original text of the poems

Mon Pays

Mon Pays est une perle discrète
Telle des traces dans le sable
Mon Pays est une perle discrète
Telle des murmures des vagues
Sous unbruissementvespéral
Mon Pays est un palimpseste
Oùs' usent mes yeux insomniaques
Pour traquer la mémoire.
(Ousmane Moussa Diagana – Mauritania. [sa])

My Country

My country is a humble pearl
Like footprints in the sand
My country is a humble pearl
Like the murmuring of waves
In the rustling of eventide
My country is a palimpsest
Where I strain my sleepless eyes
To hunt down memories.

(Translated by Catherine du Toit:2017)

Piaf

die mossies van Parys
lewe ’n sekondetik lank
van die krummels
van die baie mense
op die somerse terasse

padam padaam padam
kort is hulle lewe & vaal
padam padaam padam
min hulle waarde in swart
padam padaam padam

hulle hop-hop liggies
van tafels na stoele na
sypaadjies tussen voete
van al die baie mense
op die somerse terasse

padam padaam padam
lank was haar lewe & lyding
padam padaam padam
veel haar waarde in swart
padam padaam padam

die mossie van Parys
was so eenders & so anders
as die mossies van Parys
(Carina van der Walt, 2013)

Piaf

the sparrows of Paris
live but an instant long
off the crumbs
of the many people
on the summery terraces

padam padaam padam
short are their lives and grey
padam padaam padam
little their worth in black
padam padaam padam

they lightly bounce
from chairs to tables to
sidewalks among feet
of all the many people
on the summery terraces

padam padaam padam
Long was her life and her suffering
padam padaam padam
high her value in black
padam padaam padam

the sparrow of Paris
was so similar & so different
from the sparrows of Paris
(Translated by Diek Grobler, 2016)

Amon L'isa

eensaam in 'n sel van glas
staar jy mat na hulle wat
kollektief weet wie hulle is
en hulle aan jou opdring

– begeerte en walging
in gelyke maat
man en vrou –

aanvanklik is jy selfbewus
tot lewe gestreel
uit die skugter skildershand

van Leonardo da Vinci

later blatant gedistingeer
deur Marcel Duchamp
met strepiesnor en bokbaardjie

L.H.O.O.Q.

nou word jy in besit geneem
deur kameragaatjies beloer
die ster van ’n peepshow
’n orgie van aanskouing

L.O.L.
(Carina van der Walt, 2013)

Amon L’isa

lonely in a cell of glass
you stare dully at them who
collectively know who they are
and impose themselves on you

- desire and revulsion
in equal measure
man and woman -

initially you were self-consciously
caressed to life
from the timid painter’s hand
of Leonardo da Vinci

later blatantly distinguished
by Marcel Duchamp
with pencil moustache and goatee

L.H.O.O.Q.

now you are being possessed
peeked at through camera holes
the star of a peep show
an orgy of scrutiny

L.O.L.
(Translated by Diek Grobler, 2016)

nagwaak

saans wag ’n swart nagvlinder op die Place de la République
eers hou sy haar vlerke toe soos hande saam in ’n gebed
terwyl mense die plein opstroom as ruspes vir ’n nuwe tyd

& die ou tyd opvreet vou sy haar vlerke half oop & rys die oproep
– VRYHEID GELYKHEID BROEDERSKAP –
terwyl alle papies toegevou in komberse sit ontvou haar vlerke

wanneer 2 geel oë aan weerskante op die oker plein flikker
– gefladder van hande
saam vir manne- & vroueliefde saam teen vreemdelingehaat
geruis van stemme in purper flitse
saam teen werkloosheid saam teen kruis keppel kopdoek –
teken ’n dirigent met ’n neonbuis 4 maatslae in ’n wit patroon

op haar swart vlindervlerke klink die nuwe wêreld simfonie
versnel die maatslae vir beskawing: já nee já nee já nee jaaa
debout! arise! staan op staan op!

op die Place de la République swel die nagvlinder elke aand groter
sidderings word stuiptrekkings kokonne skeur met ’n gespartel
brose jongmense kry vlerke is poeier tussen die vingers van die tyd

(na aanleiding van #NuitDebout, Maart – April 2016)

(Carina van der Walt, 24 September 2016, bygewerk op 14 Maart 2017)

vigil

In the evening a black butterfly keeping watch over the Place de la République

At first with her wings folded together like hands in prayer

As people are flooding the square like caterpillars for new times.

& gnawing at the old days she partly unfolds her wings, and raises the call

– LIBERTY EQUALITY FRATERNITY –

As pupas sit enfolded in blankets she unfolds her wings

When two yellow eyes flash on opposite sides of the square

– fluttering of hands

United for same sex love, united against xenophobia

Rustling of voices in purple flashes

United against unemployment, against cross, kipah khimar

A conductor with a neon baton draws 4 beats in a white pattern

On her black butterfly wings the new world symphony sounds

The metre of civilisation accelerates: yes no yes no yes no yesss

debout! arise! staan op staan op!

On the Place de la République the butterfly is swelling with every sunset

Shivers become convulsions cocoons crack full of flounder

Delicate young people develop wings are dust between the fingers of time

(inspired by #NuitDebout, March – April 2016)

(Translated by Diek Grobler:2018)

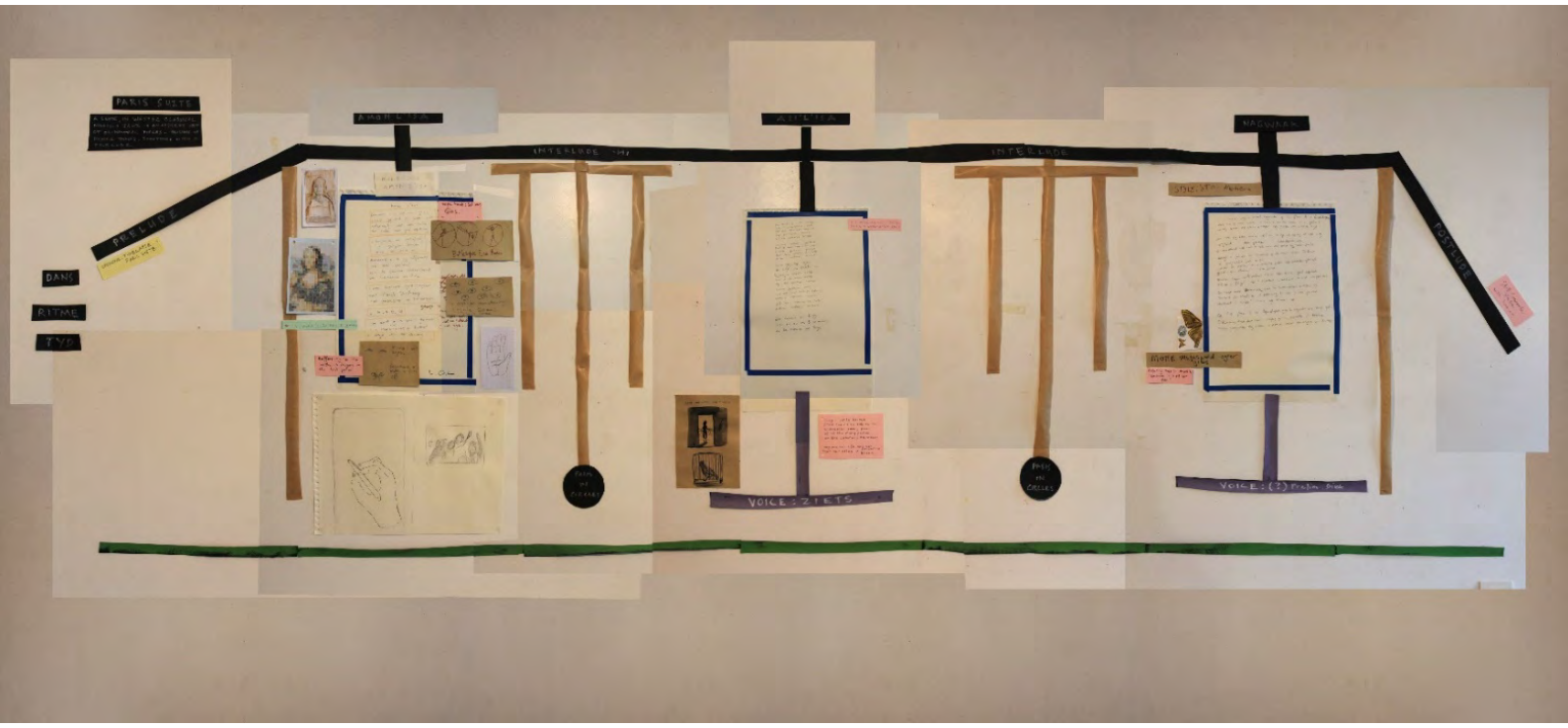


Figure 1. Diagrammatical structure of *Parys suite* (Grobler 2018)

Making Animated Poetry

Diek Grobler

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the subject of

ART

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND MUSIC

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

MODERATOR: Professor Elfriede Dreyer

Introduction

This exhibition consists of two animated poetry-films conceived and produced through two diametrically opposite creative processes, employing carefully considered narrative strategies.

The first film, *Mon Pays* is a poetry-film of a poem by Mauritanian poet and academic Ousmane Moussa Diagana. The poetry-film was created using metamorphosis as its overarching narrative strategy. This approach is well suited to the specific poem, which is lyrical and esoteric, allowing vast room for personal interpretation and meaning making on the part of the reader. This freedom is extended to the animator who relied on the suggestive power of the words for influencing the evolution of the film from the first frame to the last. The film was made on a single piece of paper, starting from a white surface without a script, storyboard or design, painting and repainting the surface guided by a stream-of-consciousness approach with intuition and improvisation.

The second film, *Parys suite* is very different both in technique and format. *Parys suite* consists of five movements, three of which are poetry-films. The film is constructed from a database of pre-constructed animated footage and takes editing as its main narrative strategy. The database includes clips produced through various techniques and media, a large portion of which takes an unconventional approach to animation, and wilfully avoids the smooth naturalistic movement characteristic of mainstream animation. The database clips include time-lapse, pixilation, kinestasis, and flickerfilm, which I collectively refer to as ‘disrupted-image animation’.

Animated poetry-film could be summarily defined as a considered combination of poetry and animated film. In my opinion, animated poetry-film should be regarded as an art form to be viewed using the mindset of looking at fine art, rather than from a popular entertainment perspective. Poetry-film does differ from other gallery-bound video artwork in many respects, of which the presence of the poetic text within the film is a major consideration in the way such work would be displayed. It was decided to exhibit the films on an online platform to focus on the films’ narrative approach and construction, and not to focus on the mode of its display.

The display of time-based and filmic work in a gallery setting is often dependent on factors external to the work, including the mode of display, the measurements of the screen, and even the level of comfort of the seating.

This exhibition presents the practical results of my research that aims to study and expand the practice of narrative strategies in the creation of animated poetry-films. It is therefore important to accentuate the temporal nature and narrative structure of the animated poetry-film; that has a beginning and an end and is of a specific fixed duration. These traits are opposed to a video installation that is often infinite and relies on the scale and condition of its display for much of its effect. Presenting the work on a digital platform aims to focus attention on the work itself, not the environment in which it is presented. On a digital platform, the work is internationally accessible, and the viewer can choose the manner, scale and location of viewing. Digital display is also aligned with poetry-film practice that finds its predominant publication platform on the world wide web.

Figure 2. Posters for *Mon Pays* and *Parys suite*

Both films have been presented in physical environments within various arts contexts. *Mon Pays* travelled in South Africa and France as part of a theatrical production, and has also been selected for and screened at various international poetry-film festivals. *Parys suite* was presented as a public screening, exhibition, and discussion at the 2018 Tuin van Digters annual poetry festival in Wellington in South Africa. It has also been presented for screening and discussion at poetry events in Tilburg and Eindhoven in the Netherlands, and was selected for the Zebra Poetry Film Festival in Berlin, and the 9th International Video Poetry Festival in Athens.

In the two films in this exhibition, I have successfully tested two distinct narrative strategies and two contrasting cinematic approaches. Other narrative strategies and cinematic approaches could have

been applied to the same poems, resulting in very different and possibly equally successful poetry-films. There are no absolute truths or definitive solutions in art, and the artwork will always represent an individual point of view (the author and the animator are both alive and well). The poetry-film is not an adaptation of the poem nor a representation of the poem on film. It is something new into which the poem has evolved. In the animated poetry-film, the animator borrows the words of the poet and hopes to present the viewer with binocular vision: an idea seen from two points of view – that of the poet and of the animator – with the hope that the viewer can form their own view more clearly. The viewer can choose to accept the vision or not, and add their own experience to it, or not. The process of viewing, like the process of interpreting and creating, will always be individual and personal, presenting an infinite variety of possible outcomes to the artwork.

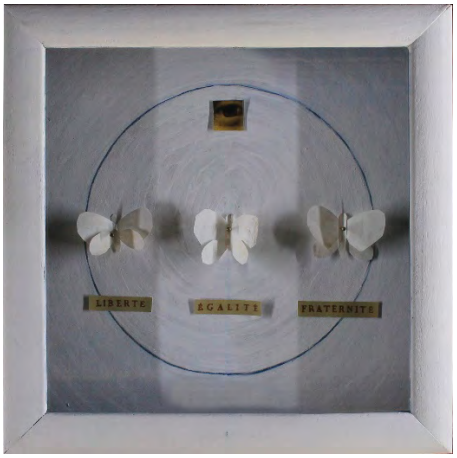


Figure 3. Diek Grobler, *3 Revolutionary moths* (2018). mixed media. 20 x 20 cm. Repurposed artefacts from the production process of *Parys suite.*

Metamorphosis

Metamorphosis is a governing principle of animation and functions on a multitude of levels in animated film, from being a process for the evolution of form, to functioning as a metaphor, thought process, and editing technique. While animated forms are lifeless objects made of paper and paint, “the animation technique and its underlying effect of metamorphosis create an illusion of sentience, intent, movement and existence” (Buchan 2013:523). Metamorphosis is the transitioning of one shape into another and is fundamental in creating the illusion of animated movement, as metamorphosis occurs from one drawing in an animated sequence to the next.

What makes animation unique in its relationship with metamorphosis is that animation is the only medium in which the transformation from one form into another is literally enacted before the eye of the viewer. “[T]he processes of change becomes part of the narrative of the film. A form starts as one thing, and ends up as something different” (Wells 2002:136). In animation, everything is possible, plausible, and visible; transformations, spatial transpositions, anthropomorphism, and the outright denial of the laws of physics all happen in front of the eye of the viewer.

Figure 4. Metamorphosis of the picture plane in *Mon Pays* (Grobler 2017).

In *Mon Pays* two instances of metamorphosis between mediums are at play. At first, the poem underwent a metamorphosis from written text into a song[1] that functions as the film’s soundtrack. In the second process of metamorphosis, the literary text transforms into a poetry-film. The process of metamorphosis defines the film in terms of its materiality. The viewer is presented with a single picture plane that starts evolving from the first frame, driving the visual narrative by the constant transformation of this surface. Due to the plasmaticity[2] of the image, cutting of sequences is avoided, and the narrative is driven by metamorphosis as the painting surface physically evolves from scene to scene. This plasmaticness extends to the process of conceptualisation via stream of consciousness and free association, relying on the inherent pliability of the animated world in which

[1] Composed and performed by South African singer/songwriter Laurinda Hofmeyr.

[2] A term coined by Sergei Eisenstein (1988) which refers to the organic ability and ease with which the animated object or image can assume any form, and by virtue of its freedom can be removed from the laws of physics.

everything can transform into anything whatsoever. The film's narrative is open-ended, leaving the viewer in a possibly perplexed state as to the meaning of it all. The process of looking and comprehending becomes a process of metamorphosis itself, where the 'message' is understood not to have a fixed form.

Mon Pays

(Video link: https://vimeo.com/281670374)

Mon Pays is the kind of poetry-film that bridges the gap between art and popular entertainment as it ventures into the territory of music videos. As in music videos, the film was created specifically to act as visual accompaniment to a song, and also to act as a marketing tool for the music.

Mon Pays was commissioned as part of a live theatre project titled *Afrique mon Desir*, which consisted of poems from French-speaking Africa set to music by South African composer Laurinda Hofmeyr, and performed by Hofmeyr and the Africa mon Desir ensemble. I was commissioned to create a range of animated material to serve as a visual accompaniment to the sung poetry in a series of live stage performances. Most of the material created for the show functioned as visual backdrops to the on-stage action.

Mon Pays was selected from the outset to be a poetry-film with a life independent from the theatre production. The poem was selected for a poetry-film due to its suitable length, but especially because the poem suffered little structural interference in the process of being set to music. The text in the song differs from the original poem only in that the last three lines are repeated as a chorus.

Figure 5: Six frames from the first 20 seconds of *Mon Pays* in which the process of image making is discernible.

Mon Pays
Mon Pays est une perle discrète
Telle des traces dans le sable
Mon Pays est une perle discrète
Telle des murmures des vagues
Sous unbruissement vespéral
Mon Pays est un palimpseste
Où s' usent mes yeux insomniaques
Pour traquer la mémoire.

My Country
My country is a humble pearl
Like footprints in the sand
My country is a humble pearl
Like the murmuring of waves
In the rustling of eventide
My country is a palimpsest
Where I strain my sleepless eyes
To hunt down memories.
My country is a palimpsest
Where I strain my sleepless eyes
To hunt down memories.

(Ousmane Moussa Diagana – Mauritania. Translated from French by Catherine du Toit.)

The film records the continuous metamorphosis of an image painted over a period of two months. In the film, the period of time is condensed to 3 minutes 32 seconds. The animator paints at the stop-motion rostrum table, regularly photographing the image to record the changes constantly made to the image.

The presence of the artist remains visible in the film in the visual style of the imperfect erasure and repainting of the surface, and the visible traces of the physical media revealed in the film. The shiny wet surface of the paper is visible, betraying the nature of the image, and the viewer is allowed to observe the dulling of the surface as the water evaporates. The landscape metamorphoses continuously. Markings appear and disappear, and always leave traces of its being made and of its disappearance.

Production

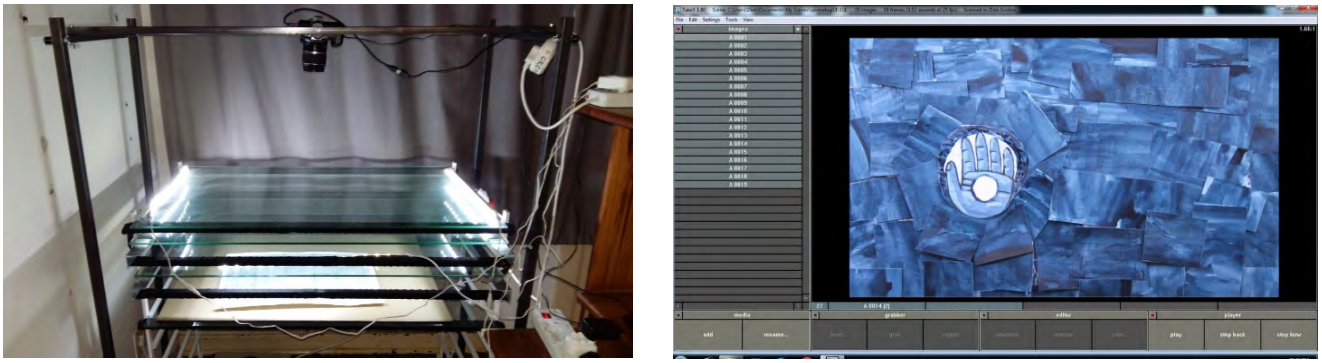


Figure 6. On the left is a stop-motion rostrum table. A camera is mounted above the table, filming downwards where the artwork is created frame by frame. The camera is connected to a laptop on which the images are recorded using the stop-motion software, Take 5 which can be seen on the right.

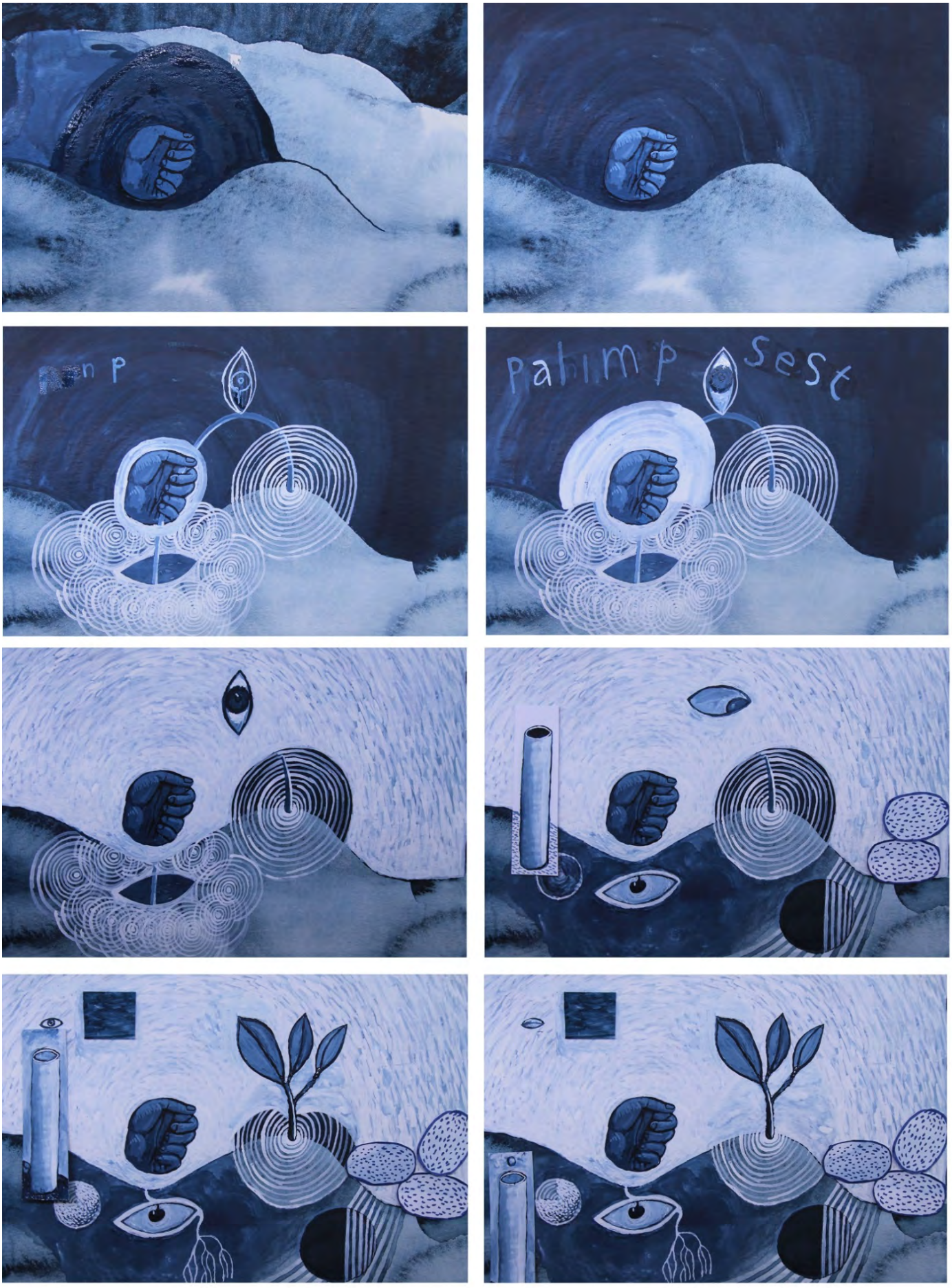


Figure 7. Eight frames captured of the painting process that constantly transforms the painting surface.

Editing

The very nature of animation as a practical process of constructing a film frame by frame puts editing at the very heart of the medium. Pioneer experimental filmmaker Maya Deren viewed editing as one of the primary devices of signification available to the film artist; this view could be extended to animation which requires editing between every two sequential frames. Sequential relationships between frames define animation, a fact which becomes suddenly apparent when such relationships are disrupted, which is a specific purpose of 'disrupted image animation' techniques. Because of the refusal of these techniques to mimic reality, their explicit avoidance of smooth movement and their insistence on challenging the conventional concepts of spectatorship, they have increased potential to create meaning as a visual semiotic system. A freedom from realism gives this type of animation the potential to make propositions in a manner similar to that of language. The editing process from a data-base filmmaking approach, supplies the animator with a database of visual phonemes, morphemes, lexemes, syntax, and context from which to construct a visual language which is poetic in its own right. Editing, from this point of view, becomes a process of authoring, as meaning is constructed through the way in which the animator applies and manipulates his database of videoclips.

Parys suite

(Video-link: https://vimeo.com/310613864)

Figure 8. The diagrammatical structure for *Parys* suite taking shape in my studio at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, 2017.

Parys suite is episodic in format, 13 minutes in duration, and consists of seven parts: a prelude, five movements, and a post-lude. It contains three poems by Carina van der Walt.

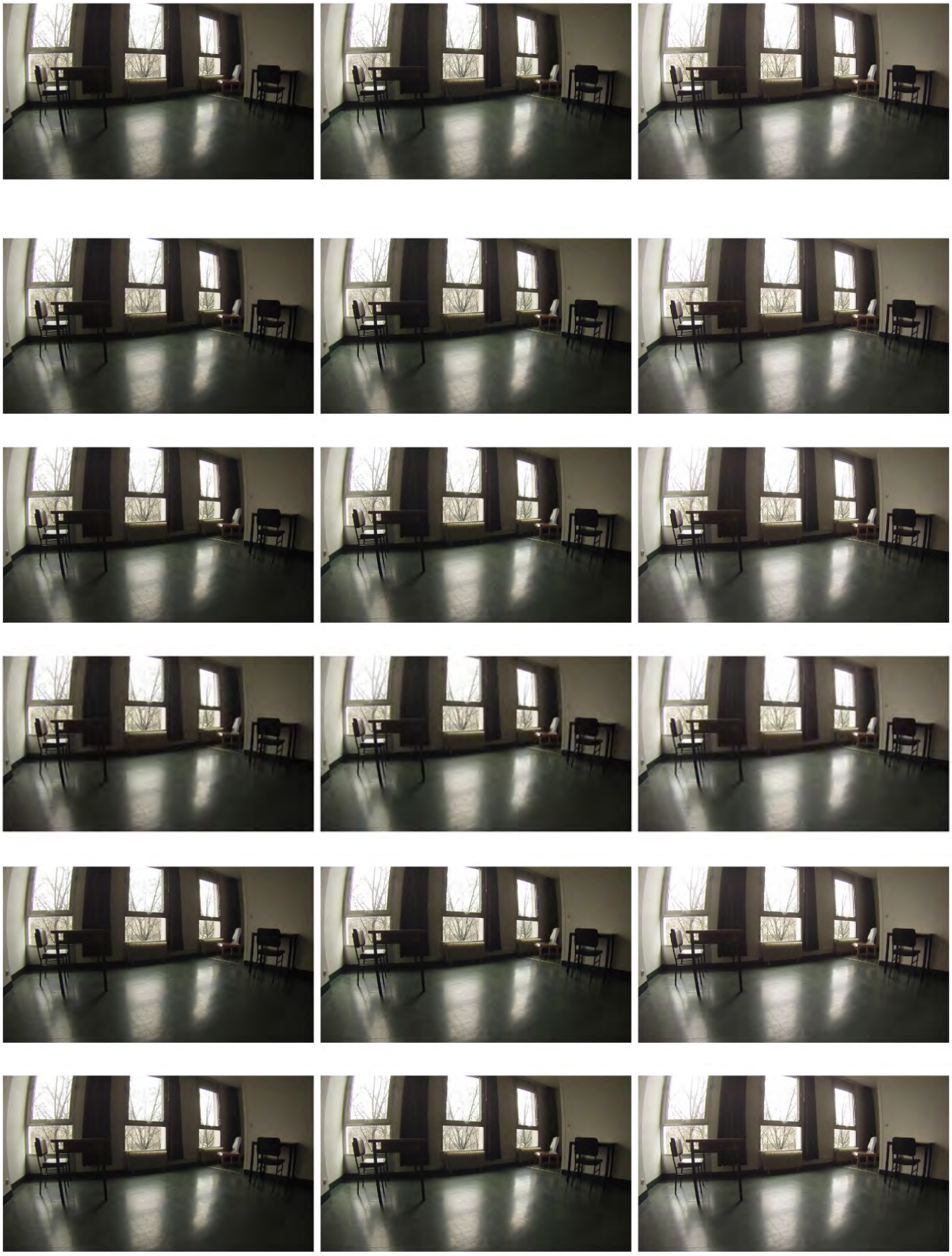


Figure 9. In the prelude nothing happens, but time passing…

Movement 1: Piaf

Piaf

die mossies van Parys
lewe ’n sekondetik lank
van die krummels
van die baie mense
op die somerse terasse

padam padaam padam
kort is hulle lewe & vaal
padam padaam padam
min hulle waarde in swart
padam padaam padam

hulle hop-hop liggies
van tafels na stoele na
sypaadjies tussen voete
van al die baie mense
op die somerse terasse

padam padaam padam
lank was haar lewe & lyding
padam padaam padam
veel haar waarde in swart
padam padaam padam

die mossie van Parys
was so eenders & so anders
as die mossies van Parys

(Carina van der Walt, 2013
Translated by Diek Grobler, 2016)

Piaf

the sparrows of Paris
live but an instant long
off the crumbs
of the many people
on the summery terraces

padam padaam padam
short are their lives and grey
padam padaam padam
little their worth in black
padam padaam padam

they lightly bounce
from chairs to tables to
sidewalks among feet
of all the many people
on the summery terraces

padam padaam padam
Long was her life and her suffering
padam padaam padam
high her value in black
padam padaam padam

the sparrow of Paris
was so similar & so different
from the sparrows of Paris

Figure 10. Three frames from the final sequence of Movement 1: Piaf. The sparrow appears and disappears.

Piaf by Carina van der Walt is a romantic poem that references the tragic life of the famed singer. The poet uses the sparrows of Paris as a direct metaphor for the singer (Piaf was nicknamed ‘the sparrow of Paris’). This poem is romantic, nostalgic and charming presenting a clichéd, but apt perception of Paris, with Edit Piaf as a personification of that cliché. The visual style chosen to depict this poem reflects its romantic nature and uses a hand-painted Parisian cityscape and hand-drawn animation of sparrows. Themes of value versus worthlessness, timelessness versus temporality, and loneliness and freedom underlie the poem. Most of the visual material is concerned with the depiction of the sparrows that are depicted in their mannerisms of movement and the flurry of taking flight.

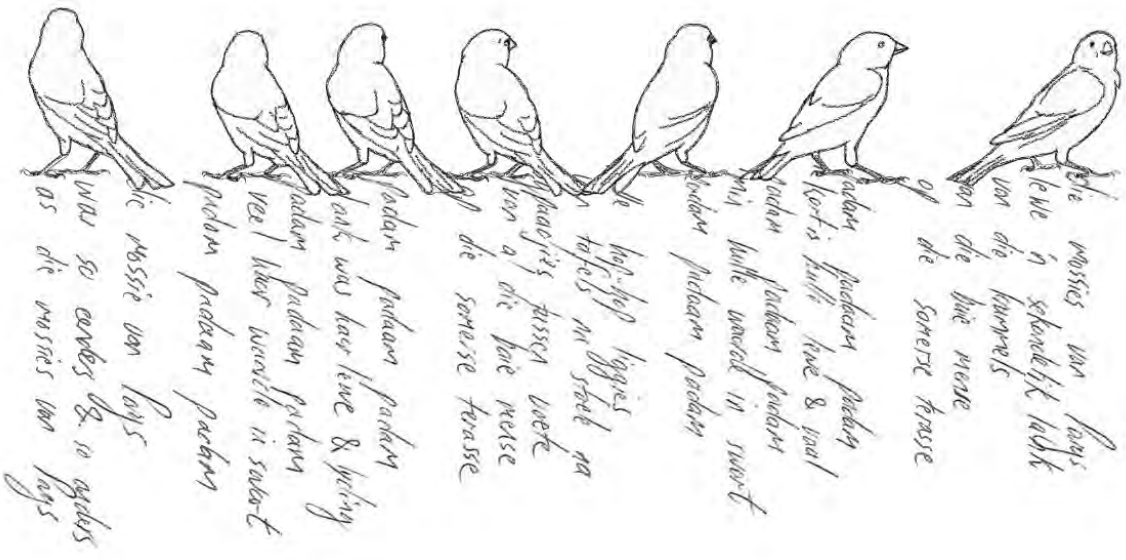


Figure 11. Diek Grobler, *Mossies slaan min ag op poësie (Sparrows have little regard for poetry)* (2018). Pigment print on Hahnemühle paper, 10,5 x 15 cm. Concrete poem of the handwritten text with sparrows from the film.

Movement 2: Parys in sirkels (Paris in circles)

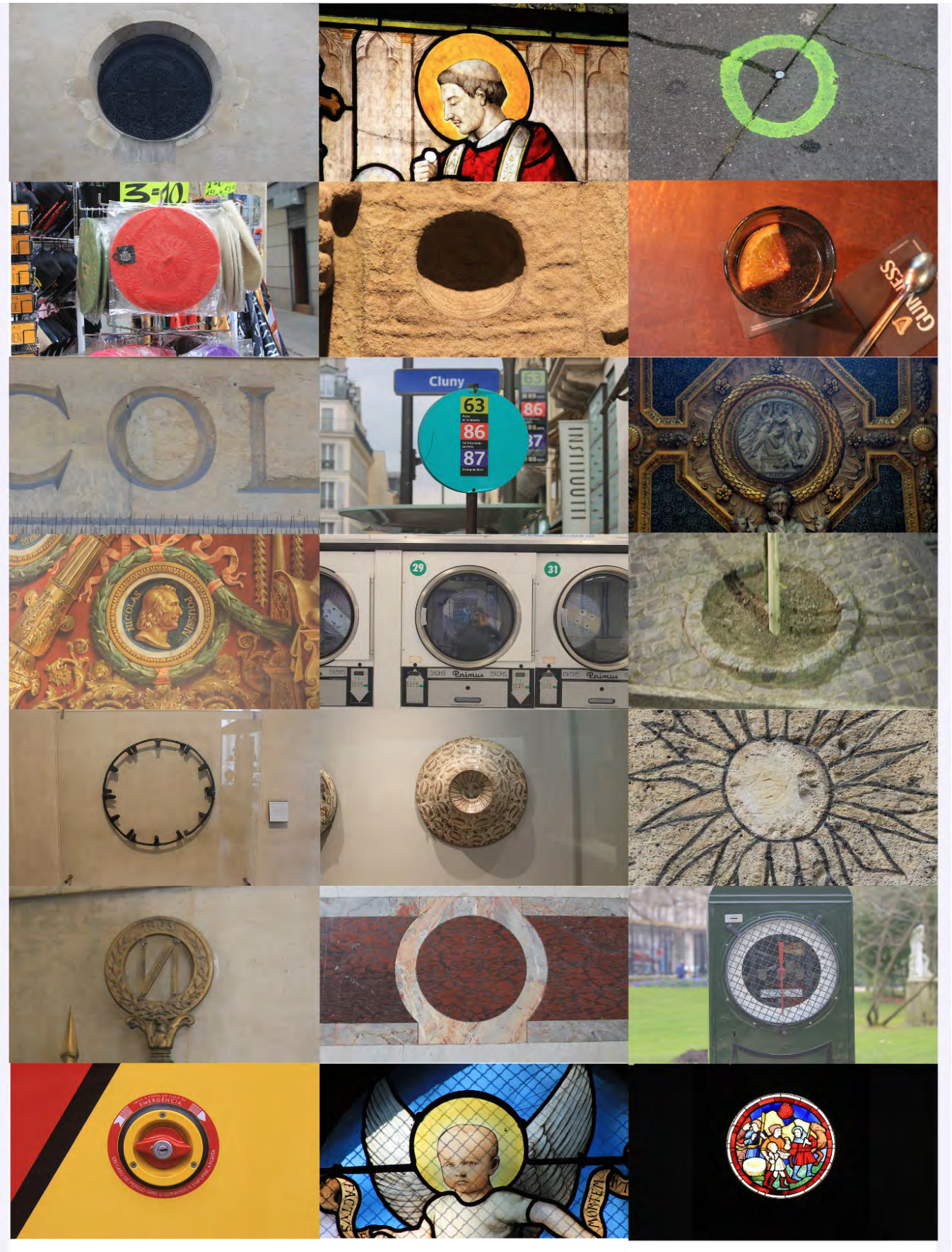


Figure 12. Movement 2: Parys in sirkels is a flickerfilm that paints a portrait of Paris through the rapid display of circular shapes photographed in a myriad of locations all over the city.

Movement 3: Amon L'isa

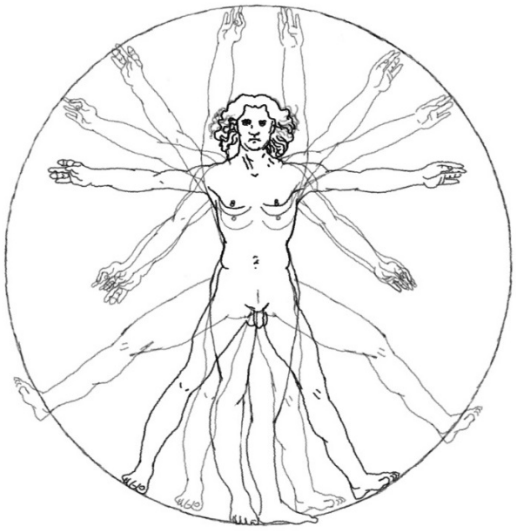


Figure 13. Da Vinci's *Vitruvian man* is gender-adjusted and animated. Compilation of working drawings from the production of the film.

Figure 14. Diek Grobler, *Amon L'isa; The poetry-film as comic-strip* (2018). Pigment print on Hahnemühle paper, 16 cm x 16 cm x 12. Imagery from the film was adjusted and reconstituted and printed as a leporello artist's book.

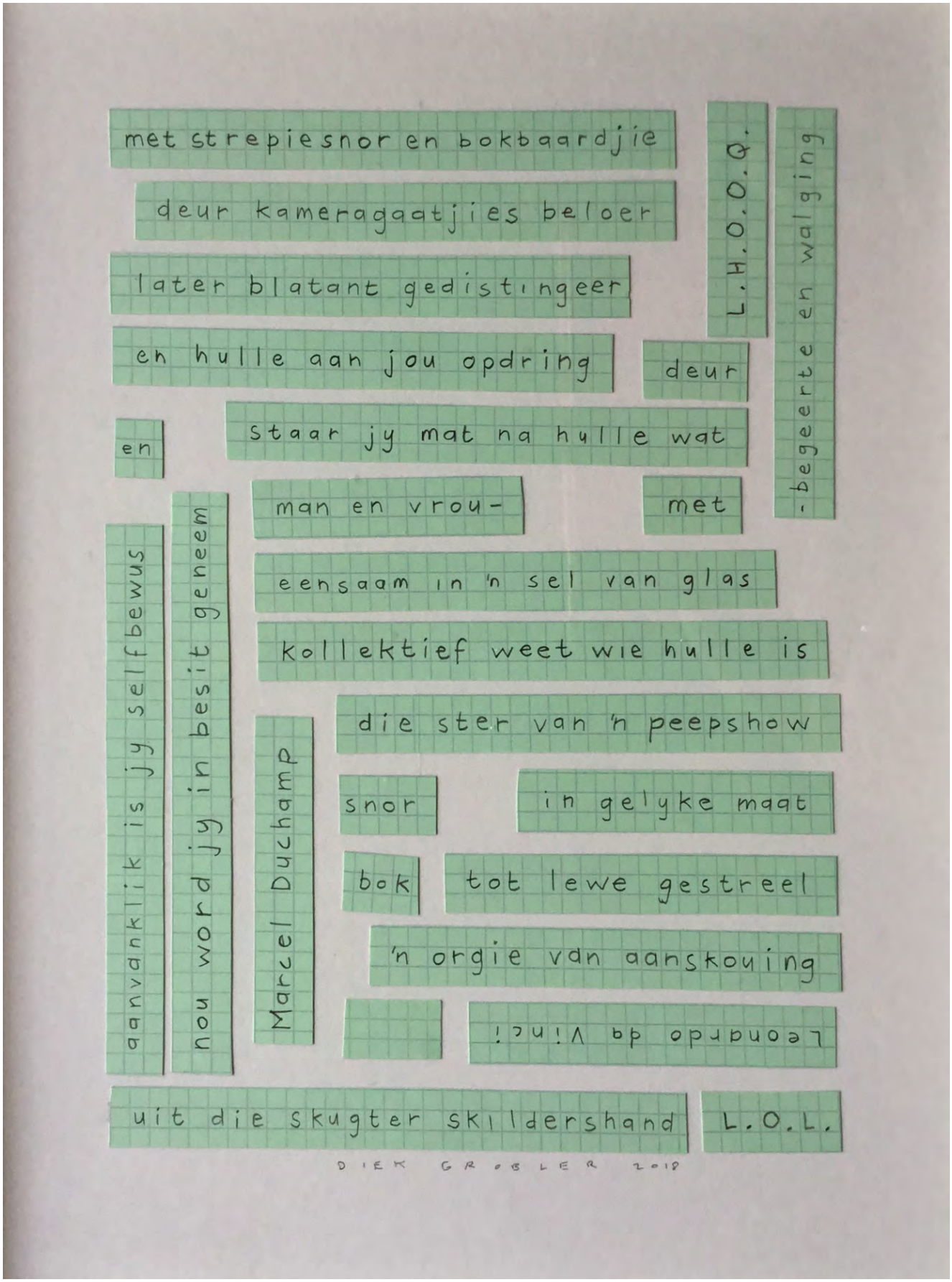


Figure 15. Diek Grobler, *Concrete Amon L'isa* (2018). Reconstructed mixed media, 22 x 32 cm. The text cards used in film production are repurposed as a co-incidental concrete poem.

Movement 4: Gebaretaal (Sign language)

Figure 16. Movement 4: Gebaretaal (Sign language). The 64 individual photographs which comprises the flickerfilm used in this movement.

Movement 5: nagwaak (vigil)

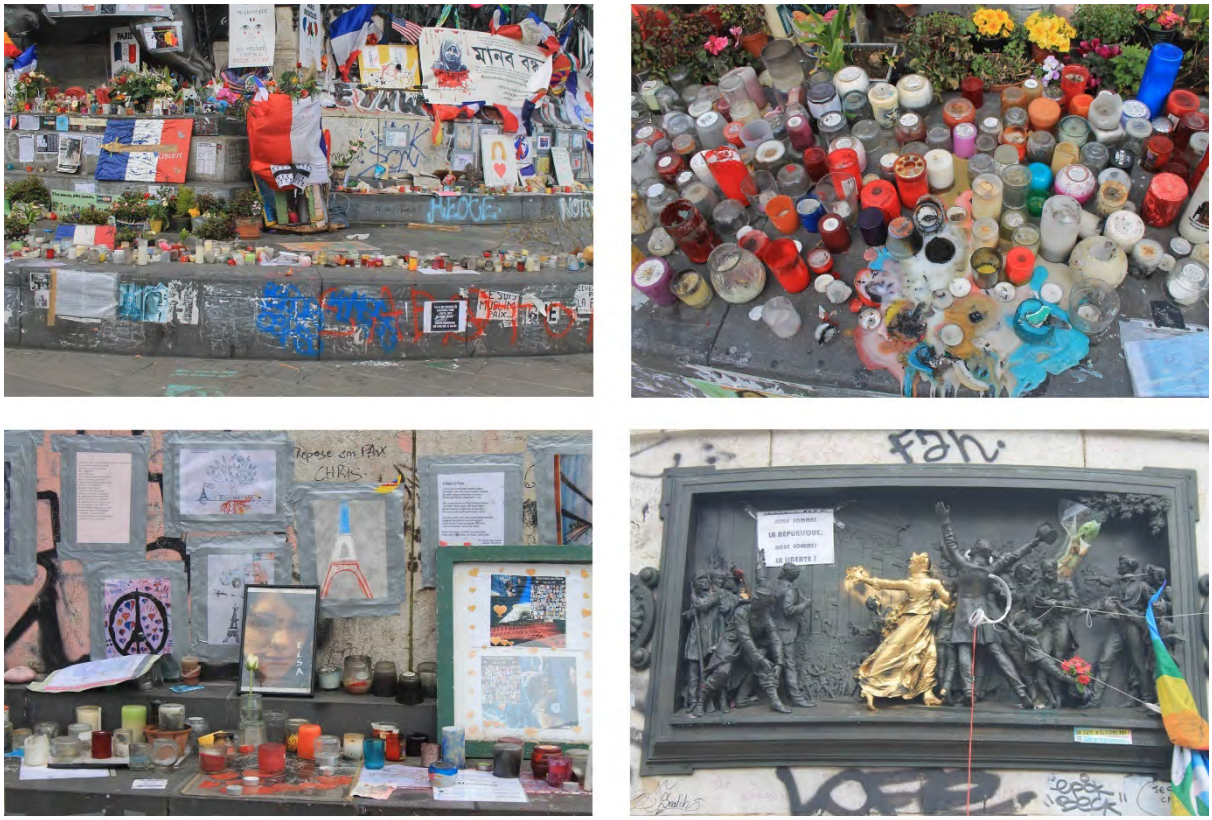


Figure 17. Vandalism as public protest and commemoration: Makeshift shrines to the victims of Paris terror attacks during 2015 on the pedestal of the Monument to the Republic on the Place de la République. The statue formed a centrepiece to the Nuit Debout protests. Photographs by the artist, 2016.

Movement 5: nagwaak was inspired by the #NuitDebout protests of March and April 2016 on the Place de la République in Paris (and elsewhere in France) that I attended a few times. Instigated by a range of social issues, the protests were very civilised, organised, and even poetic, intending to be a social revolution by peaceful, non-disruptive protest. The protesters would occupy the square at night, conversing about all manner of social issues in an orderly manner, and go to work during the day (‘nuit debout’ translates loosely as ‘we rise at night’). The protests were instigated by labour reform legislation perceived as unjust.

Figure 18. Protester-musicians on the Place de la République.

One evening when I attended, I found little groupings of musicians spread all over the packed square, rehearsing music. I found that the gathering was an orchestra 'of the people'[3] rehearsing to play Dvořák's 'New World Symphony' (Symphony No. 9) at midnight.

Figure 19. Protester-musicians on the Place de la République.

The 'New World Symphony' was specifically selected for its symbolic implications –establishing a new social order; a new world. Collecting as much video and photographic material as possible, I asked Van der Walt to write a poem about the event.

nagwaak

saans wag 'n swart nagvlinder op die Place de la République
eers hou sy haar vlerke toe soos hande saam in 'n gebed
terwyl mense die plein opstroom as ruspes vir 'n nuwe tyd

& die ou tyd opvreet vou sy haar vlerke half oop & rys die oproep
– VRYHEID GELYKHEID BROEDERSKAP –
terwyl alle papies toegevou in komberse sit ontvou haar vlerke

wanneer 2 geel oë aan weerskante op die oker plein flikker
– gefladder van hande
saam vir manne- & vroueliefde saam teen vreemdelingehaat
geruis van stemme in purper flitse
saam teen werkloosheid saam teen kruis keppel kopdoek –
teken 'n dirigent met 'n neonbuis 4 maatslae in 'n wit patroon

op haar swart vlindervlerke klink die nuwe wêreld simfonie
versnel die maatslae vir beskawing : já nee já nee já nee jaaa
debout! arise! staan op staan op!

op die Place de la République swel die nagvlinder elke aand groter
sidderings word stuiptrekkings kokonne skeur met 'n gespartel
brose jongmense kry vlerke is poeier tussen die vingers van die tyd

(Carina van der Walt, 24 September 2016, bygewerk op 14 Maart 2017)

[3] Anybody could join in to the #NuitDebout protest, and it consequently consisted of musicians from all levels – from buskers to concert musicians.

vigil

In the evening a black butterfly keeping watch over the Place de la République
At first with her wings folded together like hands in prayer
As people are flooding the square like caterpillars for new times.

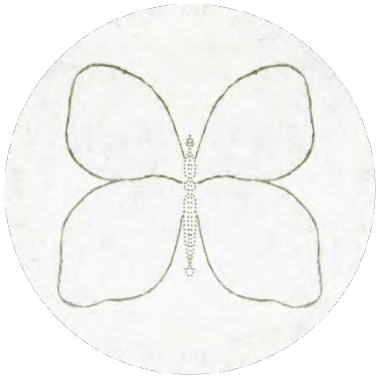
& gnawing at the old days she partly unfolds her wings, and raises the call
– LIBERTY EQUALITY FRATERNITY –
As pupas sit enfolded in blankets she unfolds her wings

When two yellow eyes flash on opposite sides of the square
– fluttering of hands
United for same sex love, united against xenophobia
Rustling of voices in purple flashes
United against unemployment, against cross, kipah khimar
A conductor with a neon baton draws 4 beats in a white pattern

On her black butterfly wings the new world symphony sounds
The meter of civilisation accelerates : yes no yes no yes no yesss
debout! arise! staan op staan op!

On the Place de la République the butterfly is swelling with every sunset
Shivers become convulsions cocoons crack full of flounder
Delicate young people develop wings are dust between the fingers of time

(Carina van der Walt, 2017. Translated by Diek Grobler 2018)



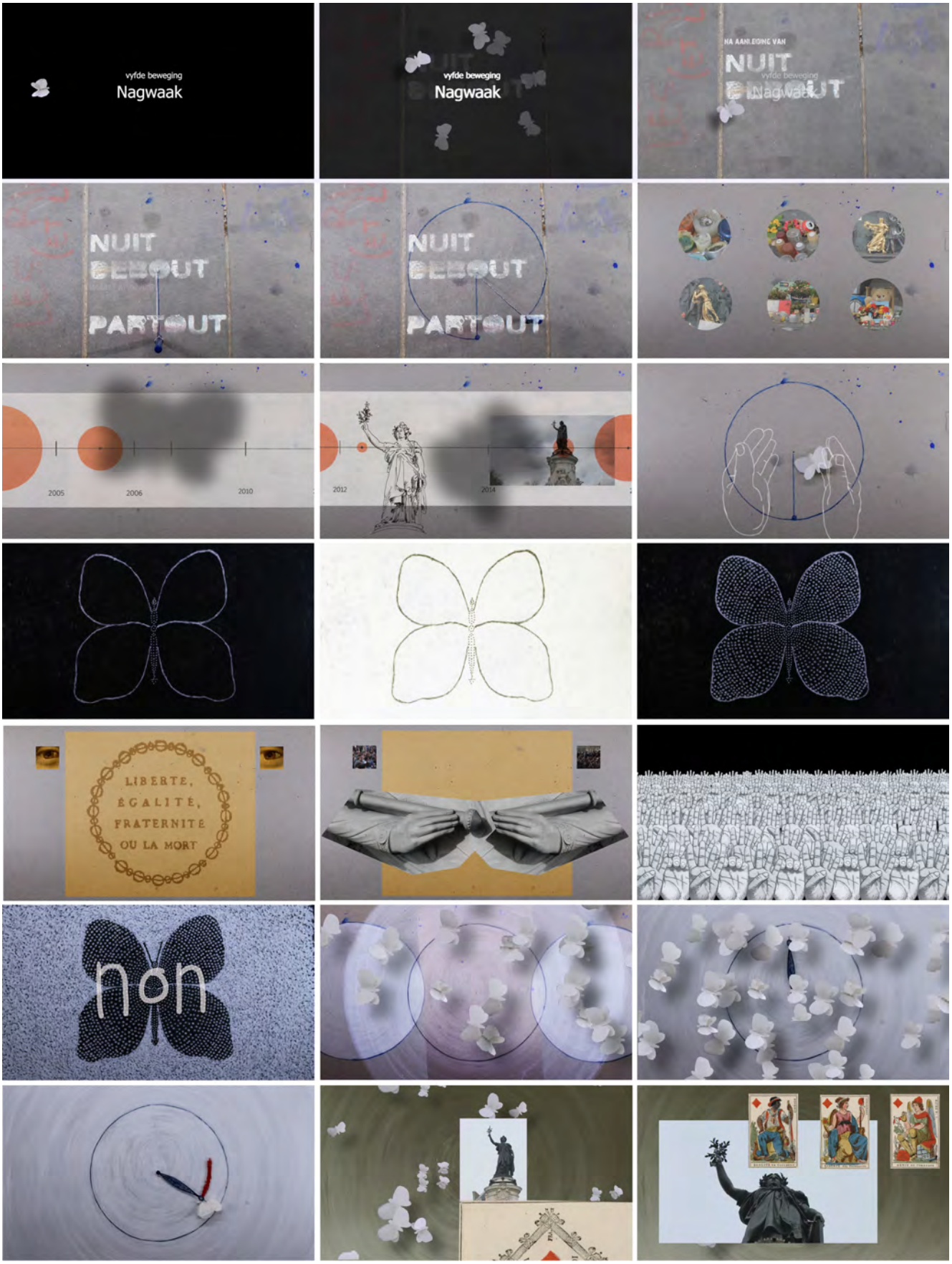


Figure 20. A series of screengrabs from Movement 5: nagwaak.

Postlude

Figure 21: Nothing happens in the postlude except for life passing.

Parys suite is a personal film, expressing a personal experience of the city. It avoids drawing a definitive conclusion, and circles around some ideas about the city, digressing and even interrupting its central train of thought. The circling, digressing, and interrupting are qualities that Eades and Papazian (2016:3) ascribe to the 'essay film'. The essay film is not reliant on facts and information, which are replaced with complex thought that does not need to be grounded in reality. The term 'essay' signifies a composition between categories and as such is transgressive,digressive, playful, contradictory, and political (Alter in Rascaroli 2008:7, 8). This circumscription also captures the essence of experimental animation, and by extension, animated poetry-film; the willingness to not lay down ground rules or be bound by pre-formulated definitions of either animation or poetry-film, but to redefine the medium for each text.

Events and artefacts

Parys suite premiered at the Tuin van Digters Poetry Festival in Wellington in South Africa in September 2018. The event consisted of screenings of the film, a public discussion led by Prof. Bernard Odendaal of North-West University, an exhibition of artworks and artefacts from the film, and two artist's poetry books made in collaboration with the poet Carina van der Walt.

Van der Walt subsequently arranged similar events in the Netherlands where she resides. Screenings and presentations with cultural organisations Man in de Maan, and die Orde van den Prince were held in Tilburg and Eindhoven.

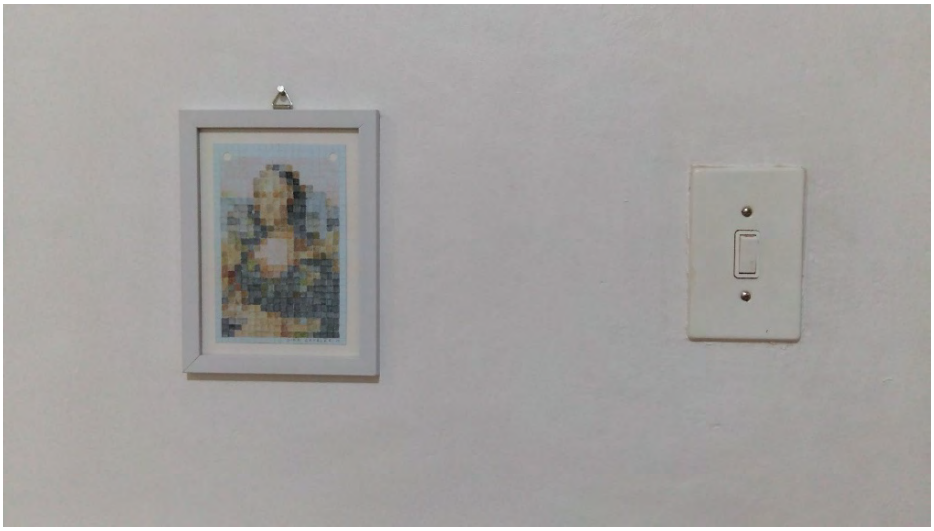


Figure 22. LEFT: Diek Grobler, Mosaic Mona Lisa (2017). 15 x 20 cm. Animation prop from Movement 3: Amon L'isa. Coloured pencil on graph paper, 105 x 148 mm. RIGHT: Light switch.

Figure 23: Installation view with digital prints, artefacts from the film, artist books, and the poet. Breytenbach Centre, Wellington (2018).

Figure 24. Pamphlets for public presentations of Parys suite in the Netherlands.

List of illustrations

Bibliography

Buchan, S. 2013. Theatrical Cartoon Comedy: From Animated Portmanteau to the Risus Purus. In: *A companion to film comedy*. A. Horton & J. Rapf, Eds. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Inc. 568.

Eades, C & Papazian, E. 2016. *The essay film: Dialogue/Politics/Utopia*. C. Eades & E. Papazian, Eds. London: Wallflower press.

Eisenstein, S. 1988. *S.M. Eisenstein: Selected Works Volume 1: Writings, 1922-34*. R. Taylor, Ed. Indiana University Press. Available from: https://books.google.com.tr/books/about/Writings_1922_1934.html?id=M3QBAwAAQBAJ&pgis=1.

Grobler, D. 2017. *Mon Pays*. South Africa: The Cape Town Music Academy. Available from: https://vimeo.com/281670374.

Grobler, D. 2018. *Parys suite*. South Africa: Veldturksvytjie & kie.

Rascaroli, L. 2008. The Essay Film: Problems, Definitions, Textual Commitments. *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media.* 49(2):24–47.

Wells, P. 2002. *Animation: Genre and Authorship*. 1st ed. London: Wallflower Press.

CURRICULUM VITAE: Diek Grobler

Diek Grobler lives and works in Pretoria in South Africa. He trained as a visual artist, obtaining a BA Fine Art from the University of Pretoria in 1987, and a MA Fine Art from the University of the Witwatersrand in 1996.

Grobler has been working with animation for 20 years. His films for children have won awards at international festivals, such as KROK (Russia 2009), Hiroshima (Japan 2018), Tindirindis (Lithuania 2009), and Teheran (Iran 2008). Since 2009, his personal work has focused on animated poetry-film. In 2014 and 2016 he conceptualised and acted as creative director on a poetry-film project, *Filmverse*, a series of 24 animated films by 24 artists inspired by South African poetry. Individual films from the project won five international and several national awards and nominations.

Filmography

BREATHE (2020) Animation, 4 min.

INHALE (2020) Animation, 4 min. Poetry-Film collaboration with South African poet Carina van der Walt. Shortlisted for the 2020 Weimar Poetry Film Prize (Weimar, Germany).

Paris suite (2018). Animation, 13 min. Poetry-film collaboration with poet Carina van der Walt.

Mon Pays (2017) Animation, 3 min 35 sec. Poetry-film of a poem by Ousmane Moussa Diagana (Mauritania). Shortlisted for the 2018 Weimar Poetry Film Prize (Weimar, Germany), the 2018 Ó Bhéal International Poetry-Film Competition award (Cork, Ireland) and *Poetry Film Live's* Film Poetry Competition award (UK) in 2019.

For the birds (2016) Animation, 2 min 30. Poetry-Film collaboration with poet Ronelda S. Kamfer.

Stick in the mud (2015) Installation of animated video, Venice Biennale, Italy. Dimensions variable.

Ek sal sterf en na my vader gaan (2014) Animation, 1 min 50 sec. Poetry-film of poem by Breyten Breytenbach.

Klein Cardo (2012) Animation, 2 min 50 sec. Poetry-film collaboration with poet Ronelda S. Kamfer.

Saturday Night Live and *In Duitsland waar die wolke in gelid marsjeer* (2010) Animation. Poetry-film collaboration with poet Danie Marais.

Het Vogeltjes ABC (2008) Animation, 6 min.

Agenda (2007) Animation, 7 min. Awards: South African Film and Television Awards (Best Animation in a Short Film). Africala online short film award, Mexico.

*Little Bang (*2006) Animation, 12 min.

Non-filmic work

Since 1988 Diek Grobler has regularly exhibited on a solo basis and in various curated group exhibitions nationally and internationally, and continues to do so. His work is in various South African public and corporate collections. A full CV is available at www.diekgrobler.co.za.