

**“RABBIT! RABBIT!”, “WATT”, “THE CURTAINS”  
AN INTERPRETATION OF CINEMATIC STORYTELLING  
THROUGH THREE DIFFERENT MEDIA  
(3D ANIMATION, STOP-MOTION ANIMATION AND LIVE-ACTION)**

by  
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*Anneme/ For my mother...*

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Visual Arts and Communication Design, M.A., Thesis, 2009

**ABSTRACT**

This three short-film project tries to comparatively evaluate the visual storytelling properties of three film techniques, live-action, 3D Computer Animation and Stop-motion (clay-mation). All of the three films aim to tell a different enjoyable story adapted to the strengths and weaknesses of each technique. To be able to establish an internal consistency and better comparability, the films are based on a common theme which is ‘solitude’ and a common genre which is ‘supernatural horror’.

This paper discusses the features of visual storytelling on each of those techniques comparatively and tries to evaluate their strengths in creating feeling and emotions. To provide a basis, this paper also examines the mythical and archetypal story behind and functions of storytelling in addition to its essentials. It also discusses the importance and necessity of ‘solitude’ in the context of storytelling. Solitude’s role in fear is discussed as well. Eventually it blends the research and discussion material with the short-films “*Rabbit! Rabbit!*”, “*The Curtains*”, and “*Watt*” in an attempt to better understand the technical aspects of the three techniques as well as their conceptual and semantic projections on and of the story.

“TAVŞAN! TAVŞAN!”, “WATT”, “PERDELER”  
SİNEMATİK HİKAYE ANLATICILIĞININ  
ÜÇ FARKLI TEKNİK ÜZERİNDEN YORUMLANMASI  
(3 BOYUTLU, STOP-MOTION CANLANDIRMA VE GERÇEK OYUNCULU FILM)

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**ÖZ**

Üç kısa filmde oluşan bu proje, üç görsel hikaye anlatım tekniğinin özelliklerini karşılaştırmalı olarak değerlendirmeyi amaçlar. Bunlar ‘stop-motion’(hamur) canlandırma, 3 Boyutlu bilgisayarla canlandırma ve gerçek-oyunculu film teknikleridir. Bu üç filmin her biri de her bir tekniğin güçlü ve zayıf yönlerine göre uyarlanmış eğlenceli birer hikaye anlatmayı amaçlar. Tutarlılık ve daha iyi karşılaştırılabilirlik sağlayabilmek adına üç film ortak olarak ‘yalnızlık’ teması ve ‘doğüstü korku’ tarzı etrafında şekillendirilmiştir.

Bu tez, bu üç görsel anlatım tekniğinin her birinin karşılaştırmalı olarak özelliklerini tartışır, duygu ve düşünce yaratmadaki becerilerini analiz etmeye çalışır. Analiz ve tartışmaya bir temel oluşturması açısından, aynı zamanda hikaye anlatıcılığının arketip ve mitolojik temellerini, yükümlülüklerini ve temel kuramlarını irdeler. Öte yandan ‘yalnızlık’ kavramının öykü anlatıcılığındaki önemi ve gerekliliğini, korku kavramı üzerindeki rolünü inceler. Sonuç olarak, bahsi geçen üç tekniğin teknik özelliklerini ve onların hikâye üzerindeki kavramsal ve anlamsal izdüşümlerini daha iyi anlayabilmek için, projeyi oluşturan “*Tavşan! Tavşan!*”, “*Perdeler*” ve “*Watt*” kısa filmlerini araştırma malzemesi ve irdelenen konularla harmanlar.

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And to all inspiring storytellers of the world...

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT .....	2
Why we tell stories: Functions and Mythological Context .....	2
A Glimpse at Narrative Theory .....	8
STORYTELLING THROUGH STOP-MOTION ANIMATION, 3D COMPUTER ANIMATION, LIVE-ACTION .....	12
Visual Storytelling.....	12
Comparison of Narrative and their Emotive reflection in Film and Animation.....	20
DISCUSSION ON SHORT FILMS: “Rabbit! Rabbit!”, “The Curtains” and “Watt”.....	32
CONCLUSION.....	44
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	45
APPENDIX A.....	49
APPENDIX B.....	50

## LIST OF FIGURES

1. Figure 1 - Still from *Memento*
2. Figure 2 - Still from *Revenge of the Cameraman*
3. Figure 3 - DeLorean car
4. Figure 4 - Modified DeLorean in *Back to the Future III*
5. Figure 5 - Binocular Disparity
6. Figure 6 - Bullet Time in *The Matrix*
7. Figure 7 - Still from *Dimensions of Dialogue*
8. Figure 8 - Still from *Wall-E*
9. Figure 9 - Still from *The Nightmare Before Christmas*
10. Figure 10 - Still from *Coraline*
11. Figure 11 - Still from *Corpse Bride*
12. Figure 12 - An Illustration of rear-projection set-up
13. Figure 13 - Still from *The Man from Earth*
14. Figure 14 - Still from *Beowulf*
15. Figure 15 - Old man and rabbit in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*
16. Figure 16 - Watt the table lamp hunting ghosts in *Watt*
17. Figure 17 - Writer and the stopped clock in *The Curtains*
18. Figure 18 - Writer suffering from writer's block in *The Curtains*
19. Figure 19 - Old Man's short relief ends with the realization that a rabbit is sitting next to him on the tree trunk from *Rabbit! Rabbit!*
20. Figure 20 - Table lamp pulls out a round-kick in *Watt*
21. Figure 21 - Still from *Street of Crocodiles*
22. Figure 22 - A stop-motion 'undead' in *Evil Dead II*
23. Figure 23 - Earth rising with underlight in *Evil Dead*
24. Figure 24 - Earth rising with underlight in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*
25. Figure 25 - One of the ghosts in *Watt*
26. Figure 26 - Edward in *Edward Scissorhands*
27. Figure 27 - Camera falling on a ghost in *Watt*
28. Figure 28 - Old man stands desperate in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*
29. Figure 29 - Hiding point of view in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*

## INTRODUCTION

The starting point of this project is, to try and tell enjoyable stories. Filmmaker Brian De Palma says “People don’t see the world before their eyes until it’s put in a narrative mode.”<sup>1</sup> It might sound like an overstatement; nevertheless it emphasizes the place and impact of storytelling in our lives.

Humanity has always managed to come up with new tools and mediums to tell compelling stories and it could be said that introduction of the film medium has been one of the milestones in that history. However, even though almost as old as live-action film, interestingly, animation has mostly been undervalued as a filmic storytelling medium due to possible reasons which will be discussed in this thesis as well.

Therefore, the research part of this thesis tries to understand the basic notions and motivations behind storytelling as well as their applications in visual form. In doing so, it narrows down the broad field of visual storytelling to live-action, stop-motion, ,specifically claymation, and 3D Computer Animation, thus attempts to understand the driving points, differences and similarities as well as the pros and cons, if they exist, of using animation in telling a story.

In conjunction with the research, the main project consists of three short films, each made with a relevant technique in order to understand the processes, and implications of each medium. However, there had also been an attempt at blurring the borders between these techniques without falling in the trap of overdoing, therefore losing the main point, in order to experiment with other visual possibilities.

With the aim of a more accurate interpretation of the subject, instead of selecting unrelated topics, the three short films have been placed in common grounds and a contextual framework where the theme of solitude has been in the center. Each short film tells a different version of loneliness and these versions are adapted to each technique on a personal attempt to better utilize each technique’s strengths. Accordingly, this project could also be read as a study on human solitude and its relationship to storytelling as the films try to provide a relatively indirect yet insightful perspective on the matter.

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<sup>1</sup> H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press,2003), 6.

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

### Why we tell stories: Functions and Mythological Context

Today, with the ease of access brought by technological advances, we are immersed in stories through lots of different media in almost every moment of our daily lives. However, humanity has been telling stories for thousands of years and it is commonly accepted to be dating back to the earliest communications between two human beings. Or even before...

Why do we tell stories? What is so unique about stories that make them universal as one told in a distant land can readily touch to hearts and minds of people on the other half of the globe?

“All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is very often shared by men with different even opposing, cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself.”<sup>2</sup>

What provides this? What are the functions of stories as a whole and how does it evolve in time?

It is hard to give a precise answer to most of these questions largely because of their philosophical discourse would eventually breakdown to a question like ‘what is life?’ as they are deeply interconnected and nearly as old. On the other hand, even this assumption alone could also reveal hints about the universal nature of narrative. Joseph Campbell, for instance, argues that the early stories -which are ancient myths- along with rites were means of putting the mind in accord with the body and the way of life in accord with the way that nature dictates and in doing so these old stories live with us.<sup>3</sup> To justify that he also argues “The stages of human development are the same today as they were in the ancient times”<sup>4</sup>, not physically but in terms of maturing; transforming from an obedient, dependent child into an independent adult. Though a bit loosely but

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (New York, Anchor Books, 1991), 87.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

still similarly in the sense of its timeless, archetypal quality, Paul Auster writes that “A child’s need for stories is as fundamental as his need for food.”<sup>5</sup> Porter Abbott further adds that “For anyone who has read to a child or taken a child to the movies and watched her rapt attention, it is hard to believe that the appetite for narrative is something we learn rather than something that is built into us through our genes.”<sup>6</sup> Similar to our language skills, the discussion of whether it is learned or hard-coded into our brains doesn’t really change the fact that we have a natural tendency to quickly grasp that ability.

That’s the basis of the above argument that stories may even be invented before the human communication. Does it not count a story when it is not communicated to the other people? What about a guy that makes up stories in his mind but never tells them or some other that talks to an inanimate object where there is no actual communication? Even more commonly, what about a teenager who keeps a diary only to read him/herself? Could it also be said that animal communication also has narrative information in it?

Likewise, we think of our past in our minds as a story, not necessarily as a literary art form, but in its *chronological* sense, though communicating only with ourselves. This sequential quality of stories leads us to probably the first function of storytelling, what Abbott refers to as “the fundamental gift of narrative with the greatest range of benefits” which is “the principal way in which our species organizes its understanding of time.”<sup>7</sup> This is not necessarily the precise clock time but a broader sense of time. The sense of a past, present and a future... The story might point to a specific point in time such as “yesterday at 5 o’clock”, which was impossible obviously for the early humans, or in a broader sense of for instance “after I ate” or “before the sunrise” which holds true for anytime and anywhere. The narrative time allows events to create an order of

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Auster, *The Invention of Solitude* (New York: Penguin, 1988) as cited in H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3.

<sup>6</sup> H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

time in contrast to clock time which creates a map within which we can locate the events based on their temporal coordinates.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, while this ‘gift’ is still the solid base of the other functions, narratives do much more than simply telling when we are.

“As true as it is that narrative can be an art and art thrives on narrative, narrative is also something we all engage in, artists and non-artists alike. We make narratives many times a day, every day of our lives”<sup>9</sup>

Simply put, it is the main means of how people carry on their daily social lives. It is the basis of any communication that has an event in it. A girl talking to her parents at a dinner table about her day at school is telling a story. A worker reporting to his boss about the meeting with customers is telling a story. An anchorwoman tells lots of stories to public each evening. Everybody is employed in narration business whether artist, professional, paid or not. Before the invention of writing or even until the printing press, oral storytelling was probably the main transfer source of information, rules, traditions and knowledge alike. Today, it still is the main source within casual, non-work environments. People generally don’t put into writing what they had just talked in a café with their friends. They record it on their minds, similar to what the people had done thousands of years ago, although today they obviously have more means of remembering such as taking a photo or making a sound recording. The conclusion can be drawn that stories are a way of documenting today. In that sense it could be said that history as well is also written in a story format, events following a chronological order. However, this function of stories can also be seen in fictional writing, reflecting the dreams and fears of the people of the time written.

Then what is the difference between story as documentation, casual talk and the story as an art-form? There is a good explanation and an example to this in Paul Auster’s “Invention of Solitude” that’s worth quoting in length:

“The made up story consists entirely of meanings, whereas the story of fact is devoid of any significance beyond itself. If a man says to you, ‘I’m going to Jerusalem,’ you think to yourself: how nice, he’s going to Jerusalem. But if a character in a novel were to speak those same words, ‘I’m going to Jerusalem,’ your response is not at all the same. You think, to

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 1.

begin with, of Jerusalem itself: its history, its religious role, its function as a mythical place. You would think of the past, of the present (politics; which is also to think of the recent past), and the future. – On top of that, you would integrate these thoughts into whatever it is you already know about the character who is going to Jerusalem and use this new synthesis to draw further conclusions, refine perceptions, think more cogently about the book as a whole.”<sup>10</sup>

It could then be said that narration as an art form is a container of subtexts under the events which seems to be occurring above the surface. On the other hand it should be taken into consideration that the way we structure our speech could be considered a narrative form and may very well contain subtexts as well. Therefore, as powerful as they are, Auster’s words should not be taken as dismissal of the ‘story of fact’ but rather a demonstration of the power of expression through the story as so-called as an ‘art form’ whether it be through the content or the representation of that content.

There is a search underneath, it might either be a search for the meaning of life for example or even some problem of lesser significance. The difference between narrative and philosophy is that the story reader is ever active, or at least s/he needs to be, trying to understand, to synthesize what lies beneath as Auster clearly expresses. Similarly, Cavarero also argues that:

“It reveals the meaning without committing the error of defining it... Unlike philosophy, which for millennia has persisted in capturing the universal in the trap of definition, narration reveals the finite in its fragile uniqueness, and sings its glory”<sup>11</sup>

It is also worth noting that, not every story is told to search for a deeper meaning. There is an abundant supply of stories made for pure entertainment or for commercial purposes. As a matter of fact, it should also be noted that stories are not necessarily innocent tools serving a great purpose. They are, as powerful tools of manipulation, can be used for propaganda or agitation such as enforcing roles in the society.

Joseph Campbell argues that today’s stories, and movies in particular because of their widely distribution in such a big scale, are counterparts of the initiation rituals of earlier smaller communities -the ritual of leaving the childhood behind and being a man

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Auster, *The Invention of Solitude* (England, Mackays of Chatham plc, 2005), 156-157.

<sup>11</sup> Adriana Cavarero, *Relating Narrative, Storytelling and Selfhood*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (London and New York, Routledge, 2000), 3.

of Aborigines in Australia-, however he criticizes ‘we don’t have the same kind of thinking going into the production of a movie that goes into the production of an initiation ritual’<sup>12</sup> adding that ‘a lot of the people who write these stories do not have the sense of their responsibility. These stories are making and breaking lives. But the movies are made simply to make money.’<sup>13</sup>. The stories and the storytellers carry a huge responsibility when looked at this point. On the other hand, It would be harsh to criticize each and every movie of being made just for money.

One of the most crucial functions of myths is putting the individual in harmony with one’s environment to prepare one for his/her journey. Campbell defines this as ‘The Hero’s Journey’, the story of man overcoming obstacles, such as good over evil, and positions it as the roots of stories and myths.<sup>14</sup> He also answers to the Moyer’s question of why there is so many stories of the hero in mythology with ‘Because that’s what’s worth writing about.’<sup>15</sup> This theme can be transformed into almost countless versions and when done right, people are never bored of it.<sup>16</sup> The hero wears different costumes in different places, does encounter different types of beasts, has different goals on the surface but they all can be eventually reduced down to the hero’s deed, the ultimate goal underneath. Campbell argues that there are two types of deed, the ‘physical’ or the ‘spiritual’ one, and the hero always achieves it unless he is represented as a charlatan, a fake that impersonates a better character than he actually is, in which case will fail.<sup>17</sup> This might be a bit problematic to apply to real life though, as not all stories have happy endings but again, that might be due to the mistakes the individual makes or there might have been a spiritual achievement that no one else but the individual knows. What might sound like a tragic story could in fact be an epic tale.

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (New York, Anchor Books,1991), 102

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 103.

<sup>14</sup> Mike Wellins, *Storytelling Through Animation* (Massachusetts, Charles River Media, Inc., 2006), 24.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (New York, Anchor Books,1991), 151.

<sup>16</sup> Wellins, *Storytelling Through Animation* (Massachusetts, Charles River Media, Inc., 2006), 24.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (New York, Anchor Books,1991), 152-155.

Take William Wallace in the movie 'Braveheart'<sup>18</sup> for instance, even when he is about to be executed he doesn't give up his fight and he achieves his deed even though he dies. The function of these myths is to prepare the individual to the hardships that one might face whatever path one takes. The conflict does not mean that everybody should fight with some physical enemies on a blade duel. The scientist for example has his/her own hurdle, the musician has his/her own, while the mother has her own.

However, one should not fall into the mistake of separating entertainment from the meaning. A work of art might have both in equal or in different proportions and can still be a commercial success too. Science fiction movies like, 'Star Wars'<sup>19</sup> or 'The Matrix'<sup>20</sup> can be considered as two good examples. There is an equal amount of philosophy and entertainment involved in those. The idea is subtly refined so it does not seem like a didactic lecture which is considered as a failure in terms of storytelling by many. The story is there on a plate, beautifully sitting on the table with all the charm and visual effects. It is up to the viewer to reach and grab to taste it and decide whether or not s/he likes it:

“That movie (*Star Wars*) communicates. It is in a language that talks to young people, and that's what counts. It asks, Are you going to be a person of heart and humanity – because that's where the life is, from the heart-or are you going to do whatever seems to be required of you by what might be called “intentional power”? When Ben Kenobi says, “May the Force be with you,” he's speaking of the power and energy of life, not of programmed political intentions.”<sup>21</sup>

The story may also function as a representation of dreams of humanity. The science-fiction of yesterday is today's reality as today's sci-fi will likely be tomorrow's reality. Or even narration as an art form's sole purpose could also be serving to a single or multiple emotions as well. Just because it is pure entertainment does not make it less significant. Actually, for a story to be interesting, and to be heard, it first needs to be

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<sup>18</sup> *Braveheart*, DVD, directed by Mel Gibson (1995, USA, Icon Entertainment International, Paramount Home Video).

<sup>19</sup> *Star Wars*, DVD, directed by George Lucas (1977, USA, Lucasfilm, Twentieth Century-Fox Film corporation).

<sup>20</sup> *The Matrix*, DVD, directed by Andy and Larry Wachowski (1999, USA/Australia, Village Roadshow Pictures, Warner Bros. Pictures).

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (New York, Anchor Books, 1991), 178-179.

entertaining. It might make one cry, laugh, fear, think or be inspired. Also, it might still hold other messages that it is not necessarily trying to convey. That gives the artists a great responsibility in constructing their stories as they are the ‘mythmakers of our day’ responsible for the ‘mythologization [*sic*] of the environment and the world’<sup>22</sup>. It could then also be concluded that, stories not only tell when we are but also where we will be.

### **A Glimpse at Narrative Theory:**

Narrative Theory is a tremendous field of study that far exceeds the sphere of this thesis writing. However, a brief walkthrough on some key concepts that this thesis is grounded in would prove beneficial both for the reader and for the unity of the text itself.

Up until now the story and the narrative has been used as interchangeable words in this text to prevent confusion. On the other hand, they are not necessarily the same thing. Narratologists describe narrative as “representation of an event or a series of events” and argue that it consists of story and narrative discourse where the former is the event or events and the latter is those events as represented.<sup>23</sup>

To determine the distinction between the two, Abbott refers to the term “chronologic” of Seymour Chatman.<sup>24</sup> Simply put, the term states that narrative has a ‘doubly temporal logic’, both internally (the duration of the events that forms the plot) and externally (the duration of the representation, e.g. the length of the film).<sup>25</sup> It is significant in the sense that audiences or readers can watch/read/listen a hundred years’ story in a few hours’ entertainment and still the story does not lose its essence.

There is a major distinction also in the ordering of events. Abbott argues that a story can’t go backwards where the narrative discourse can.<sup>26</sup> A film by Christopher

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>23</sup> H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003), 12-16.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 30.

Nolan, 'Memento'<sup>27</sup> is a good example for that. (Fig. 1) The protagonist suffers from anterograde amnesia (a disorder marked by an inability to create memories of facts and events)<sup>28</sup> and the film is constructed in a way that it goes from the end to the beginning revealing the mystery in a reverse order. As the film ends the puzzle is completed and the audience leaves the theatre tired but happy finally having learned the truth. The film was finely constructed backwards but the story did not really go backwards. The viewer had constantly been challenged to understand the actual chronologic order of events.



Figure 1. Still from *Memento* Note: Copyright IFC Films  
Photo by Danny Rothenberg. From  
<http://www.imdb.com/media/rm1967495424/tt0209144>

Kenneth and Mary Gergen suggests that first of the 'two related ingredients' to 'convey the sense of orderly movements' in a story are first a 'goal state or a valued endpoint'.<sup>29</sup> This is not to say that all stories must have an end. The goal might exist but the result may not be revealed. Abbott argues, "Aristotle wrote that the well-made tragedy has a beginning, a middle, and an end. But this was an evaluation rather than a

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<sup>27</sup> *Memento*, DVD, directed by Christopher Nolan (2000, USA, Newmarket Capital Group, Summit Entertainment, Columbia Tristar Home Video).

<sup>28</sup> Daniel Pendick, "Memory Loss at the Movies" Spring, 2002  
<<http://www.memorylossonline.com/spring2002/memlossatmovies.htm>> (accessed April 25, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> Kenneth J. Gergen and Mary M. Gergen, "Narrative Form and the Construction of Psychological Science" in *Narrative Psychology, The Storied Nature of Human Conduct*, ed. Theodore R. Sarbin, 25 (USA, Praeger Publishers, 1986).

definition.”<sup>30</sup> The success or the effect could be discussed but it would still be a narrative. Secondly ‘selection and arrangement of events in such a way that the goal state is rendered more or less probable’<sup>31</sup> which is also called causation. To drive the story there can be two types of events, “constituent”, those that are essential for the story to proceed, and “supplementary”, absence of those which do not disrupt the integrity of the story.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, the ordering of events in a narrative need not be in a linear way either going forward or backwards like in ‘Memento’. This has been and still being used extensively in the popular contemporary television series ‘Lost’, revealing bits about past, future and present time, using flashbacks and flash-forwards, back and forth continuously, keeping the audience’s attention, curiosity and involvement fresh.

Audiences’ or readers’ involvement is highly important as a narrative is not only constructed by its author: “The teller tells what happened so that audience can also tell what happened.”<sup>33</sup> In Abbott’s words the same phenomenon is portrayed as: “... we never see a story directly, but instead always pick it up through the narrative discourse. The story is always mediated-”<sup>34</sup> Then he immediately puts out a question whether story precedes the discourse or not, reinforcing his argument with the statement “the story only comes to life when it is narrativized.”<sup>35</sup> He also exemplifies it with Tolstoy’s writing process of Anna Karenina : “... after Vronsky and Anna had finally made love and Vronsky had returned to his lodging, he, Tolstoy, discovered to his amazement that Vronsky was preparing to commit suicide.”<sup>36</sup> Yet, Poe argues that there is no intuition

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<sup>30</sup> H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press,2003), 53

<sup>31</sup> Kenneth J. Gergen and Mary M. Gergen, “Narrative Form and the Construction of Psychological Science” in *Narrative Psychology, The Storied Nature of Human Conduct*, ed.Theodore R. Sarbin, 25 (USA, Praeger Publishers, 1986).

<sup>32</sup> H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press,2003), 21

<sup>33</sup> Patrick O’Neill, *Fictions of Discourse, Reading Narrative Theory* (Canada, University of Toronto Press inc., 1994), 14.

<sup>34</sup>H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press,2003), 17

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 18-19.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 19.

involved in his writing ,particularly in the poem ‘The Raven’ and it has been constructed methodologically, step by step.<sup>37</sup> (It should also be noted however that some scholars argue the essay itself was a satire.) Whatever it might be, it eventually boils down to the style and methodology of the author. In film or animation on the other hand this discussion is almost non-existent since the script, as a solid proof of the narrative that precedes the film is existent. Yet again, improvisations might occur also in the filmic form but what is seen is mostly pre-planned.

Narrative discourse can briefly be explained as all the tools and methods used for the representation of the story, whether it be film, literature, music, painting or the like. It should again be emphasized that narrative has two feet, the story and the discourse. Without one of them, or one being shorter, it is hard to make it stand. It is not uncommon to hear criticisms about films such as ‘The story had some great potential but the director couldn’t pull it off’ or ‘The technique was great but the film felt quite empty’.

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<sup>37</sup> Edgar Allen Poe, “The Philosophy of Composition”, 1846  
<<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/poe /composition.html>> (accessed April 25, 2009)

## STORYTELLING THROUGH STOP-MOTION ANIMATION, 3D COMPUTER ANIMATION, LIVE-ACTION

### Visual Storytelling

There are numerous media for visually telling stories, from cave paintings to comic books and video games. However as scope of this thesis suggests the techniques and parameters related to cinematic storytelling in live action and animation (more specifically stop-motion and 3D computer animation), will be discussed here. Some of these techniques might be common with other media where others might be unique. It would nonetheless make sense to briefly discuss these techniques within the framework of the qualities of filmic storytelling. The first and foremost of these qualities is as the name suggests; the existence of the visual form in telling the story also with a twist which is the motion of these images.

The visual perception of the story depicted with moving pictures should have been quite an impressive experience on the audience. Even though discredited, the popular myth of the renowned first screening of “L'arrivée d'un *train* à La Ciotat” by Lumière Brothers where the audience was thrilled when the train was coming towards the camera exemplifies that. A similar impact had been caused by an animation in Russia; many audiences who haven't seen stop-motion technique thought that the insects that were actually animated in the film “Revenge of the Cameraman” were “*trained*” to act.<sup>38</sup>  
(Fig. 2)

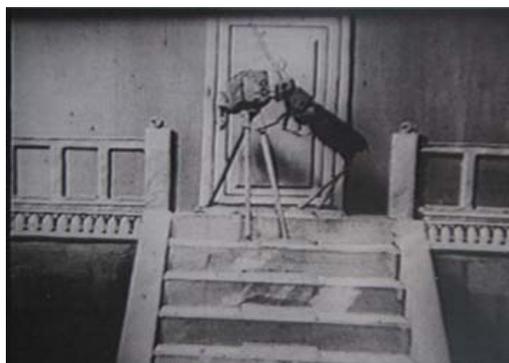


Figure 2. Still from *Revenge of the Cameraman*  
Note: Copyright L.B. Martin-Starewitch Source:  
Priebe, p.19 (2007)

<sup>38</sup> Ken A. Priebe, *The Art of Stop-Motion Animation* (USA, Thomson Course Technology, 2007), 19.

Could it then be said that in filmic storytelling the film subrogates the reality? It would be hard saying so at least for today's audiences who are used to this medium and are aware of what they are watching is a film. On the other hand, it could be said that this illusion of movement produced by the rapid projection of images is a *dream-like experience* that humanity has not met before in this capacity. Dreaming experience is a strictly personal one however the film makes the dream a shared experience. It also projects the daydreamer's dreams, fantasies, fears and such to others in an alternative reality. In here, the alternative reality is used to signify the difference of projected reality on the screen from the actual physical reality of the audience. This makes the reality an interesting issue as it is this believability what the film is trying to achieve.

Considering other storytelling media, there is a different level or *layer* of reality involved in visual storytelling. Walter Benjamin when comparing painting and film in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" wrote that: "The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web."<sup>39</sup> However, as Richard Allen argues "the mechanical ability of the camera to record 'reality' is also subject to manipulation and control."<sup>40</sup> In fact these control and manipulation tools communicate the story and forms what is called a "story-space". This story-space contains what Chatman calls as the 'existents' of the story which are basically 'characters' and 'settings'.<sup>41</sup> He later discusses that in cinema, contrary to verbal storytelling which has an abstract story-space that needs a reconstruction in the mind, this story-space is "literal" that is "objects dimensions and relations are analogous, at least two-dimensionally, to those in the real world."<sup>42</sup> It would be true to say that the image projection in verbal-storytelling is mental. If it is a non-standardized existent that is in question, such as a human being, the determinative effect of the visual medium is even more prominent. Then again, the mental image in

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<sup>39</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art at the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", 1936 as cited in Patrice Rollet, "The Magician and the Surgeon: Film and Painting" in *The Visual Turn, Classical Film Theory and Art History*, ed. Angela Dalle Vacche (New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 2003), 25.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Allen "Representation, Illusion and the Cinema" in *The Visual Turn, Classical Film Theory and Art History*, ed. Angela Dalle Vacche (New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 2003), 228.

<sup>41</sup> Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse, Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (New York, Cornell University Press, 1980), 19.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 96-97.

verbal storytelling need not be abstract and can be quite analogous when for example a “standardized definition” is used.<sup>43</sup> If one reads “1981 DeLorean”(Fig. 3) in a novel he/she can immediately create a clear mental image of it if they know the car, but it is quite some other thing to read a verbal description of the DeLorean used in the film “Back to the Future”<sup>44</sup> (Fig. 4) and create the same mental image before seeing it. The filmmaker has the advantage of using this deterministic quality in his/ her advantage but also needs to be doubly careful in every visual detail that might cue the audience. Such as the placement and design of the objects, characters, decorations and costumes which could and would probably tell something to the viewer... Instead of for example telling the audience the story goes around in 1970s through the use of titles, voice-overs or dialogues, showing the audience a hair style specific to the era could do the job.



Figure 3. DeLorean car Source: delorean.com



Figure 4. Modified DeLorean in *Back to the Future III* Note: Copyright Universal Pictures

The issue of the two-dimensionality of the film versus the three-dimensionality of the physical world will also be discussed a bit later in this chapter, but before, it would be better to look at tools of the story-space in cinematic narrative as it is also a part of it. In short, Chatman describes these “spatial parameters” of distinctions between story-space and discourse-space under five headings:

- “1.Scale or Size: Comparison of the size on projection and the real life.
2. Degree, kind and area of reflected illumination: The properties of the light source and color.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 102.

<sup>44</sup> *Back To The Future*, DVD, directed by Robert Zemeckis (1985, USA, Universal Pictures, MCA/Universal Home Video).

3. Clarity or degree of optical resolution: Sharp or soft focus, in or out of focus.
4. Position: (a) Position in vertical, horizontal dimensions of the frame, (b) relation to other existents at a certain angle from the camera
5. Contour, texture, and density of the existents”<sup>45</sup>

The filmmaker is free to use and tweak these tools in a way s/he chooses, in order to better tell his/her story. The techniques to make use of these parameters to tell the story are ample and they are already coded into the minds of the audiences. “We derive meanings from kinds of shots and other filmic techniques because we have learned the codes and conventions of television and film practice.”<sup>46</sup> One of them is “point of view” the angle an audience is presented the image with. Paul Messaris gives the example of a child associating the low angle shots of superheroes with their moments of triumph.<sup>47</sup> Based on this, it can be said that the audience is educated or in other words ‘conditioned’ to interpret the meaning of these angles, either consciously or unconsciously, through repeated exposition to them. However, there is something more that enables the audience to easily make this association. That is, their reproduction of real-life situations; “looking up at powerful people and looking down at weak people.”<sup>48</sup> Or even more concretely: ‘Looking *up* to parents and looking *down* to small kids’. Meyrowitz calls this as “paraproxemics; camerawork that derives its effectiveness from an analogy to real-world domain of spatial communication.”<sup>49</sup>

When a casual viewer is watching a film s/he doesn’t consciously try to relate these ‘paraproxemics’ to his/her personal experiences. If s/he tried to do so s/he would probably lose the actual story considering the amounts of these cues in all those visual parameters and details, adding the temporal cues, sound effects, music, dialogues and the subtexts. Instead, interestingly, all those chunks of information are interpreted in the brain automatically pulling the audience into the story rather than losing it. This doesn’t however say that everything in a visual story is instantly communicated to the audience.

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<sup>45</sup> Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse, Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (New York, Cornell University Press, 1980), 17-98.

<sup>46</sup> Paul Messaris, *Visual “Literacy”, Image, Mind, & Reality* (Colorado and Oxford, Westview Press, 1994), 7.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 32.

Some of that information demands the audience to have some background on the topic and some other simply requires a reviewing.

The real physical world is a three-dimensional space that is to say it has a depth, “there is a distance from the viewer’s eyes to any point in visual field.”<sup>50</sup> Film on the other hand is the two-dimensional recording of this 3D space with an artificial eye which is the camera and later its projection of again on a 2D screen. While watching the film however depth is sensed and one can easily understand, for instance, which character is in the foreground and which is in the background. In animation the space depends on the technique used. Stop-motion animation with animated puppets is quite similar to film in that sense, unlike classical drawn animation like the Disney movies in which the story-space itself is in 2D and then projected to 2D. What about the 3D computer animation? Computer screen is definitely a 2D space but the objects in it have the sense of depth and can be rotated 360° in any direction in that virtual 2D space. What does this tell us about our perception and understanding of perception of the real world then? What provides that illusion? One interesting thing to note is that, “the retina does not record depth”, it is the brain that infers that information.<sup>51</sup> Brain does it through using some visual cues. In Messaris’s book “Visual Literacy” these cues are described as:

1. *Binocular disparity*: The two eyes have different points of view and the images formed on the retinas differ which can serve as a depth cue<sup>52</sup> (Fig. 5)
2. *Motion parallax*: Changes in position relative to the surroundings.<sup>53</sup> An example to this would be, when travelling in a car the the mountains in the background seems to displace slowly compared to fast moving electric posts in the foreground.
3. *Occlusion*: If an object partly obstructs the other one the obstructing object is closer to us.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

4. *Texture Gradients*: The texture of an object if it's uniform will look denser on the far parts.<sup>55</sup>

5. *Contours*: “Derivation of outlines of objects and surface discontinuities.”<sup>56</sup>

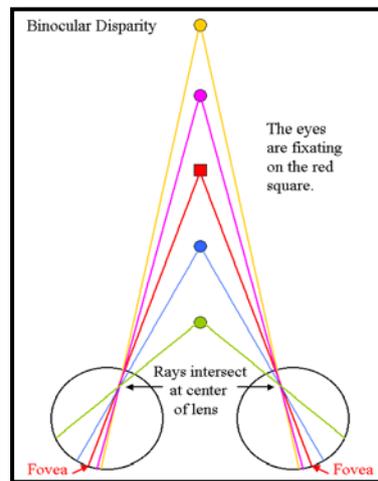


Figure 5. Binocular Disparity. Source: luc.edu

Why would this technical discussion be important? It is recognizable that these cues are very close to Chatman’s last two parameters of story-space in cinematic narrative. Therefore, it could be said that the two major differences between the *projected image* and the *real image* is the “Binocular disparity” and the cutting-off of story-space performed by the screen frame. The rest of the information is recorded and projected to the screen. The stereoscopic 3D is a way to provide that disparity to increase the reality but its use is limited and requires glasses that could be counted as a distraction to some. With the new generation 3D display devices that doesn’t require any glasses the technology seems to be going in the way of holographic projection similar to those seen in films like Star Wars. In terms of creating a believable discourse-space that would make the work of the filmmaker much easier.

So far the discussion had been on the story-space and discourse-space in cinematic narrative. The film is a medium where the time to watch is also determined like its imagery structuring. It might take one reader to read a book in two days and two

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 52.

weeks to another one, depending on how fast or frequent they read; although exceptions might occur at this age where audiences can pause, rewind or stop the films as they please, films are generally meant to be watched in one sitting. Applying Poe's argument in literary writing to here, it could be said that cinematic storytelling is good for conveying a story without confounding its unity:

“If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression -for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and everything like totality is at once destroyed.”<sup>57</sup>

It should be added on a side note that the ‘proper’ viewing conditions of film in a movie theater helps providing this unity. There is minimum distraction from the outside world, the film being projected to a big screen in a dark room with sound and/or musical score that enables the viewer to focus on what s/he sees on the screen.

The temporal logic and distinction between story-time and discourse time has been discussed in the previous chapter. The discourse time, does not necessarily need to be in the same temporal order with the story time, but it does have the ‘causality’ (for classical theorists) or ‘contingency’ coined by Jean Pouillon (for modern theorists) between events in order to be followed by the audience.<sup>58</sup> The former suggests a strict causality between events where the latter has ‘probability’. “Not in the sense of ‘uncertainty’ or ‘accident’ but rather the stricter philosophical sense, ‘depending for its existence, occurrence, character, etc. on something not yet certain’. (The American College Dictionary)”<sup>59</sup> Whatever the approach may be, if the shots do not follow any sense of narrative (“or anti-narrative”) logic, what the viewer has is a bunch of unrelated clips. In this thesis the “anti-narrative” or *antistory*[sic] structure, which Chatman defines as “an attack on this convention (network or *strictly causal* structure of classical narrative that allows for only one possible choice among others) which treats all choices

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<sup>57</sup> Edgar Allen Poe, “The Philosophy of Composition”, 1846  
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/poe/composition.html> (accessed April 25, 2009)

<sup>58</sup> Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse, Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (New York, Cornell University Press, 1980), 47

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

as equally valid”, will not be discussed due to the fact that, the accompanying short films that will be analyzed are structured under classical narrative parameters.<sup>60</sup>

On top of those, the film can provide a sense of psychological pace of time through fast or very slow projection of the events. This gives a sense closer to what a person feels like the time is not passing when bored or anxious, or how fast it goes when having a good time. These manipulation tools can be used to provide more awareness on things that are otherwise not perceivable in real life such as the *bullet-time technique* (Fig. 6) used in “The Matrix”<sup>61</sup> as well as playing the movement backwards.



Figure 6. Bullet Time in *The Matrix* Note: Copyright Warner

The film as creating an illusion depends on the temporal reality formed by the structured editing of the film which Messaris calls as “*False Continuity*”<sup>62</sup>:

“Two shots joined together in the context of a broader narrative are ‘read’ by the viewer as being part of a coherent stream of space, time and action, even if the shots were in fact taken at widely separate times and places or if the actions within them were completely unrelated in reality.”<sup>63</sup>

Apart from the phrase’s contextual connection with the temporal qualities of the film, the word “read” could also be considered as significant. So far in this thesis, cinematic storytelling has been discussed as being ‘structured’ and apart from a narrator the audience is thoroughly active in the process. However, it would be important at this

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 56-57.

<sup>61</sup> *The Matrix*, DVD, directed by Andy and Larry Wachowski (1999, USA/Australia, Village Roadshow Pictures, Warner Bros. Pictures).

<sup>62</sup> Paul Messaris, *Visual “Literacy”, Image, Mind, & Reality* (Colorado and Oxford, Westview Press, 1994), 35.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 35.

point to note that some theorists like Bordwell takes the discussion insofar as to say that in watching a film, cinematic narration is constructed by the spectator, not the narrator since not all films imply an author.<sup>64</sup>

Chatman's counter-argument is that, the viewer not "...constructs but that she *re-constructs* the film's narrative.... The viewer certainly hasn't put them there."<sup>65</sup> Both of these arguments could be said to be making sense in their own way; while watching some films the viewer not necessarily thinks about the narrator, a crew behind the scenes, but just because s/he doesn't, does not make them non-existent as well. It might then be said that the effect of the intrusion of the filmmaker into the narration is itself a choice and thus a tool for the filmic storyteller. An example to that would be the use of voiceover narration that signifies the presence of a storyteller.

Though was non-existent in the earlier days of live-action and animation, it would be true to say that sound is another crucial tool for the filmic storyteller for a while, in terms of the creation of illusion and/or feelings:

"Sound principally creates the mood and atmosphere of a film, and also its pace and emphasis, but, most importantly, also creates a vocabulary by which the visual codes of the film are understood."<sup>66</sup>

In this chapter the parameters, relations and differences between, discourse-time and story-time as well as discourse-space and story-space in addition to use of sound have been discussed as the playgrounds for the filmic storyteller. It could be said that the level of realism, believability or effect of the narrative is highly interconnected with these elements.

### **Comparison of Narrative and their Emotive reflection in Film and Animation**

So far the why, what and how of visual storytelling has been tried to be covered as brief but also as broad as possible. It would not be wrong to say that this chapter will be the melting pot of all those and will be trying to seek answers to the core questions of this thesis.

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<sup>64</sup> David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 62.

<sup>65</sup> Seymour Chatman, *Coming to Terms, The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (New York, Cornell University Press, 1990), 127.

<sup>66</sup> Paul Wells, *Understanding Animation* (London and New York, Routledge, 1998), 97.

The visual storytelling has been discussed to some extent but as cinematic storytelling goes there had been inventions of different media languages. Why did we need to at some point decide to tell our stories in animation and not just stick with the live-action characters? Do they tell us different things or invoke different feelings? Do they have different strengths and weaknesses as media in conveying different themes and ideas? Do they have different codes or just follow the same traditions? Are they merely used because of their novelty value, or do they really mean more? How is the reality perceived in them? What happens when we even break the animation into drawn, stop-motion, or 3D computer animation?

Looking at the definition of animation could be a good starting point. A common one is "... a film made frame by frame, providing an illusion of movement which has not been directly recorded in the conventional sense."<sup>67</sup> This definition itself provides an essential difference between the live-action film and the animation form; the difference in the making. The animator has an extensive control over every object and subject in a scene. An animator describes this as:

"Animators have only one thing in common. We are all control freaks. And what is more controllable than inanimate? You can control every frame, but at a cost. The cost is the chunks of your life that the time consuming process devours. It is as if the subjects suck your time and energy to feed their own life."<sup>68</sup>

The Zagreb School, in defining animation emphasizes this literally 'giving life' to inanimate objects which could not be achieved in live-action stressing the philosophical aspect of the medium.<sup>69</sup> This 'giving magical powers to things' as Czech animator Jan Svankmajer would put it means something more than being amazed at the magical illusion the medium provides. The inanimate, *lifeless* objects having their own life either directly or indirectly offers the audience another layer of reality compared to its live-action counterpart. "[i]f it is the live-action film's job to present physical reality,

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<sup>67</sup> Paul Wells "Animation Forms and Meanings" in *An Introduction to Film Studies*, ed. Jill Nelmes (London and New York, Routledge, 1999), 238.

<sup>68</sup> Simmon Pummell as quoted in David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, *Film Art, an Introduction* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 2004), 162.

<sup>69</sup> Paul Wells "Animation Forms and Meanings" in *An Introduction to Film Studies*, ed. Jill Nelmes (London and New York, Routledge, 1999), 238.

animated film is concerned with metaphysical reality- not how things look but what they mean”<sup>70</sup> Svankmajer’s words also confirms this: “In my films, I move many objects, real objects. Suddenly everyday contact which people are used to acquires a new dimension and in this way casts doubt over reality.”<sup>71</sup> (Fig. 7)

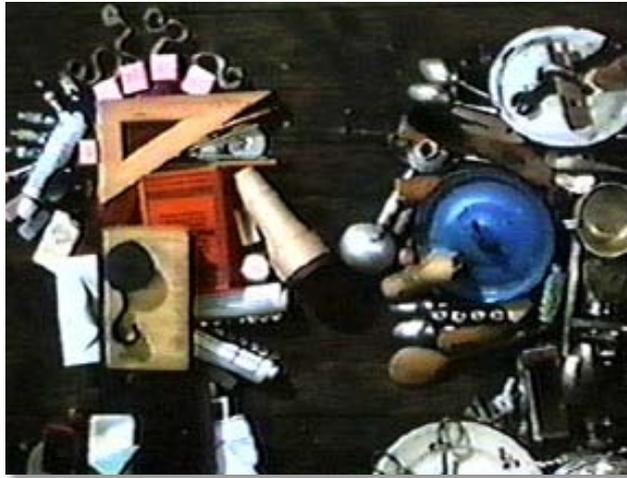


Figure 7. Still from *Dimensions of Dialogue*  
Note: Copyright Jan Svankmajer. From AWN website  
[http://www.awn.com/heaven\\_and\\_hell/svank/svank7.htm](http://www.awn.com/heaven_and_hell/svank/svank7.htm)

Both of the above quotes suggest that animation implements an alternative perception on reality. Animation compared to film, furthermore, could be said to twist the reality in another manner; by offering the audience an alternative one: Offering something impossible to exist in the present time, or ever for that matter, in physical world. Such as a ‘coyote’ smashed by a megaton anvil that can keep going on like nothing serious has happened. This has intriguing suggestions both internally and externally considering the story and discourse-space. First, this kind of *regeneration* or *indestructibility* in the story-space could be said to be reflecting the illusionary ‘life-giving’ nature of the medium; it is already not living therefore it can’t die. Secondly, it clearly expresses the extreme forms of entertainment animated stories can go due to the absence of realistic constraints.<sup>72</sup> Mike Wellins argues that “Animation incorporates

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Mike Wellins, *Storytelling Through Animation* (Massachusetts, Charles River Media, Inc., 2006), 8.

even more potential elements than standard filmmaking.... there are no rules and it is only limited by imagination.”<sup>73</sup>

It has been discussed before that the power of filmic storytelling lies in making the audience believe in what they see. Even one bad actor can ruin the entire illusion. Storytelling through animation could be more complex compared to live-action because it tries to make the audience believe in its own reality. As Wellins states: Visuals are far more extreme than a filmed live-action reality.<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, it might also be easier to make the viewer believe in an animated story because the people are already used to it and demonstrating Paul Well’s claim anything can happen in animation and expectations are limitless.<sup>75</sup>

The fact that anything can happen in animation is a notable difference from live-action where physical constraints apply. Paul Wells, argues there are forms of narrative strategies unique to animation that play a crucial role in overcoming physical constraints. One of the most significant of those strategies ‘metamorphosis’, which he defines as “the ability for an image to literally change into another completely different image.”<sup>76</sup> This provides the dream like, ‘abstract’ feeling of animation: “In enabling the collapse of the illusion of physical space, metamorphosis destabilizes the image, conflating horror ad humour, dream and reality, certainty and speculation.”<sup>77</sup> The functions of the metamorphosis are many and if the term ‘metamorphosis’ is broadened from a ‘literal change’ to going to extreme forms it could even be argued to be the main tool of animation. It would hold true considering Wellins’s point of view that “Animation is a study in extremes and abstraction.”<sup>78</sup>

The differences within the animation medium on the other hand are also significant. There are many techniques to make animated films and ‘extremes’ and effect of realism in each technique differs greatly. It should be noted beforehand, this is not to say that one technique is better in telling a story than the other, like it would be wrong to say that live-action is better than animation in that sense or vice versa. 2D,

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, xxiii.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Paul Wells, *Understanding Animation* (London and New York, Routledge, 1998), 69.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Mike Wellins, *Storytelling Through Animation* (Massachusetts, Charles River Media, Inc., 2006), 10.

drawn animation is a medium where literally anything can happen to the utmost extreme but compared to reality of live-action film, drawn characters on a 2D space are not that realistic. On the other hand stop-motion animation, using clay (or other modeling materials e.g. latex) and inanimate objects, provides far more realistic visuals. The lights, shadows, textures and colors are all existent in physical space therefore they have the unique believability and life to them. Henry Selick, the director of stop-motion movies “The Nightmare before Christmas”,<sup>79</sup> and “Coraline”,<sup>80</sup> confirms this:

“People, undeniably, always have an appeal towards hand-made objects. Stop-motion has a unique gritty style, and is full of imperfections. It has an undeniable reality, what you see is really there, and even though it is posed by hand, it moves 24 times a second. This sense of reality is what pulls me to stop-motion”<sup>81</sup>

Ken A. Priebe, the author of “The Art of Stop-motion animation” describes this by explaining his fascination by inanimate objects’ gaining life on the screen while carrying signs from the animator:

“There is also something strangely satisfying about seeing a puppet made of clay have its own life on screen, while at the same time seeing fingerprints of the animator dance around on its clay surface. It is much like leaning in close to a painting to see all the brushstrokes and canvas texture leaking through, and then stepping back to see the wonderful illusion it creates. The mark of the creator is evident in the work itself, which is why we still travel miles to see the pyramids or an original Leonardo or Picasso.”<sup>82</sup>

This could be said to provide the filmmaker, considering the storytelling function, a physical closeness to the audience. This closeness to physical reality brings along the physical constraints as well: The stop-motion animator is not as free as the 2D animator, or 3D animator, in terms of going to the extremes. The 3D computer animation could be said to stand in-between the equation as it is possible to go to wildest extremes and also, with the fast-improving technology, now able to create *hyper-realistic* imagery. However, still, probably due to stop-motion’s faulty and random nature discussed above

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<sup>79</sup> *Tim Burton’s Nightmare Before Christmas*, DVD, directed by Henry Selick (1993, USA, Skellington Productions, Tim Burton Productions, Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment)

<sup>80</sup> *Coraline*, Theatrical Release, directed by Henry Selick (2009, USA, Laika Entertainment, Universal Pictures)

<sup>81</sup> Ebru Çeliktug̃ “Gotik Bir Eglence”, *Sinema* 2009-05, (May 2009): 69, trans. myself

<sup>82</sup> Ken A. Priebe, *The Art of Stop-Motion Animation* (USA, Thomson Course Technology, 2007), xvi.

3D animation could be said to have a different feeling than what stop-motion has. It may be said that 3D animation has a more perfect, sterile, futuristic feel to it compared to the ‘gritty’, old, life-like feeling of stop-motion. Based on this assumption it might also be said that it would be harder to relate to and believe ‘*Wall-E*’<sup>83</sup> if it was made with clay and ‘*Nightmare Before Christmas*’ if it was made with as a 3D computer animation. (Fig. 8) (Fig.9) On the other hand, it is possible to emulate this ‘gritty’ effect of the stop-motion with 3D to some extent. However, continuous, conscious emulation of randomness and imperfection through an extensive level of detail would probably be harder to do than doing it with stop-motion technique and would by nature go against the very essence of 3D technique which aims to achieve unparalleled visuals with much less effort. It would also risk losing ‘the hand-made appeal’ card.

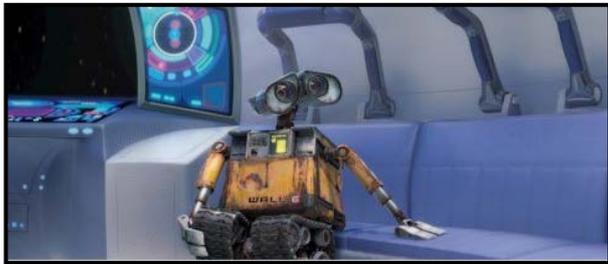


Figure 8. Still From *Wall-E* Note: Copyright Pixar Animation Studios



Figure 9. Still from *Nightmare before Christmas* Note: Copyright Touchstone Pictures

When the film art is considered, animation has mostly gone unrecognized as a significant form.<sup>84</sup> One of the reasons, could be that it has mostly been used for special effects in film history or that they are generally regarded as children’s entertainment: “by 1960s, animation and kids were forever locked together” even though they started as an “entertainment for adults”<sup>85</sup> This would not be surprising as animation could be appraised as what made the proper filmic representations of fables and fairytales possible. Another reason to why it has been disregarded could be what McLaughlin

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<sup>83</sup> *Wall-E*, DVD, directed by Andrew Stanton (2008, USA, Pixar Animation Studios, Walt Disney Pictures)

<sup>84</sup> Paul Wells “Animation Forms and Meanings” in *An Introduction to Film Studies*, ed. Jill Nelmes (London and New York, Routledge, 1999), 238.

<sup>85</sup> Mike Wellins, *Storytelling Through Animation* (Massachusetts, Charles River Media, Inc., 2006), 9.

notes as: From early on, animation and humor became tied together.<sup>86</sup> Interpreting and applying Spielberg's comments on video games to animation: "I think the real indicator [that games are equivalent of film] will be when somebody confesses that they cried at level 17"<sup>87</sup>, it can be said that the medium's ability of making the audience cry rather than laugh is generally more valued when assessing a storytelling technique.

It wouldn't be wrong to say that the extreme expressions animation provides serves the humor very well but it could also be said that animated films have already surpassed that emotional threshold. (e.g. 'The Lion King'<sup>88</sup>, 'Grave of the Fireflies'<sup>89</sup>) However, the common association of animation to humor or children's amusement tells what type of stories generally expected from an animated film. That would also be the reason why feature animation is "by and large geared towards, children and families."<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, films like 'Corpse Bride'<sup>91</sup>, 'Nightmare Before Christmas', animations of Brothers Quay and Jan Svankmajer, or even films like *Wall-E*, *Coraline* or *Wallace & Gromit*<sup>92</sup> series that have a face value that is geared towards kids, are in fact also written for adult viewers and could be shown as solid proof that animation should not be taken solely as a children version of fiction film. (Fig. 10) (Fig. 11)

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>87</sup> Steven Spielberg as quoted in Janet Murray, "Did it Make You Cry? Creating Dramatic Agency in Immersive Environments" in *Virtual Storytelling, Using Virtual Reality Technologies for Storytelling, Third International Conference, ICVS 2005, Strasbourg, France, November/December 2005 Proceedings*, ed. Gérard Subsol (New York, Springer, 2005).

<sup>88</sup> *The Lion King*, DVD, directed by Roger Allers and Rob Minkoff (1994, USA, Walt Disney Pictures)

<sup>89</sup> *Hotaru no Haka*, DVD, directed by Isao Takahata (1988, Japan, Studio Ghibli, Optimum Releasing)

<sup>90</sup> Wellins, *Storytelling Through Animation* (Massachusetts, Charles River Media, Inc., 2006), 58

<sup>91</sup> *Corpse Bride*, DVD, directed by Tim Burton and Mike Johnson (2005, UK/USA, Tim Burton Productions, Warner Bros.)

<sup>92</sup> *Wallace & Gromit in the Wrong Trousers*, VHS, directed by Nick Park (1993, UK, Aardman Animations)



Figure 10. Still from *Coraline* Note: Copyright Laika Entertainment. From IMDB website <http://www.imdb.com/media/rm869963008/tt0327597>



Figure 11. Still from *Corpse Bride* Note: Copyright Warner Bros. Pictures

When a visual storytelling form as abstract as animation is taken into consideration, here abstract is used as “unconnected to concrete reality”, discourse-time becomes doubly important. “Proper timing is critical to making ideas readable.”<sup>93</sup>, “The faster the movement, the more critical it is to make sure the audience can follow what is happening.”<sup>94</sup> The reason is not the fast paced action used in animated film, since live-action films can also have action scenes which are quite rapid in movement, it is rather the lack of real world references derived from the extreme nature of the medium.

It could be said that use of sound is another important issue when comparing live-action and animation when the real-world references are considered. In animated stories most of the sounds used are actually real-world sounds and it is not to say that they are always used or should be used faithfully as what they are actually the sound of. In fact, many animations incorporate seemingly unrelated sounds to represent events, and it becomes a necessity where it is “impossible to imagine actual sound” for, like the sound of a falling piano.<sup>95</sup> However, these sounds are generally used in such a way that they

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<sup>93</sup> John Lassater, “Tricks to Animating Characters with a Computer”, Course 1 at Siggraph 94, “Animation Tricks”. [http://www.siggraph.org/education/materials/HyperGraph/animation/character\\_animation/principles/lasseter\\_s94.htm](http://www.siggraph.org/education/materials/HyperGraph/animation/character_animation/principles/lasseter_s94.htm) (accessed May 12,2009)

<sup>94</sup> Harold Whitaker and John Halas, *Timing for Animation* (London, Focal Press, 1981 as cited in John Lassater, “Tricks to Animating Characters with a Computer”, Course 1 at Siggraph 94, “Animation Tricks”. [http://www.siggraph.org/education/materials/HyperGraph/animation/character\\_animation/principles/lasseter\\_s94.htm](http://www.siggraph.org/education/materials/HyperGraph/animation/character_animation/principles/lasseter_s94.htm) (accessed May 12,2009)

<sup>95</sup> Paul Wells, *Understanding Animation* (London and New York, Routledge, 1998), 99.

could be related to the visual image in addition to going one step beyond from being the signifier of events, atmospheres or environments to communicating emotional information.

The real-world referencing of the sound is more evident in use of voices and it would be the strongest connection of animated characters to physical real-world - even more so for those who are rendered through computer software or are drawn-. ‘*Simba*’ a cub in “*The Lion King*” or a clownfish in “*Finding Nemo*”<sup>96</sup> are dubbed by *real* people and can talk human languages. When voice acting is concerned it would be hard to say that real-world references are lacking. There is a layer of real world that remains ‘relatively’ *untouched* there. It is not only the ‘mark of the creator’ but also the creator that exists in the illusion like it would in a live-action film.

On the other hand, technically the use of voice dubbing in animation differs from that of in live-action. In live-action voice is recorded either while the actor is performing or dubbed after, synchronizing with the actor’s performance. In animation however, the voice recording comes first, then comes the animation.<sup>97</sup> Considering that the animator controlling an external body is the actor in any animated film, and assuming that the voice actor and animator are two different people, there are at least two different actors involved in one performance. This could be a risky process due to its duality but the frame by frame making process of animation neutralizes that risk.

Revisiting the story-space, discourse-space discussion of the previous part, it could be summed up to say that the “spatial parameters” differs in live-action, stop-motion and 3D computer animation based on their physical properties and limitations. Taking scale and sizing as an example, it is easily noticeable that stop-motion animation is generally made up of miniature sets and props that are a fraction of their real scales where in 3D animation they can ‘virtually’ be of any size. This kind of a limitation would have been a problem in terms of creating visual effects at times where computer generated imagery was non-existent, such as ‘*King Kong*’<sup>98</sup>, however it has been solved by using a technique called “rear-projection” where the actual footage was projected on

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<sup>96</sup> *Finding Nemo*, DVD, directed by Andrew Stanton and Lee Unkrich (2003, USA, Walt Disney, Pixar Animation Studios)

<sup>97</sup> Ken A. Priebe, *The Art of Stop-Motion Animation* (USA, Thomson Course Technology, 2007), 38.

<sup>98</sup> *King Kong*, DVD, directed by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack (1933, USA, RKO Radio Pictures, Warner Home Video).

a screen sitting behind the puppet and filmed again this time with the frame by frame animated puppet.<sup>99</sup> (Fig. 12) With the hyper-realistic CGI of today the technique has been replaced by digital compositing.

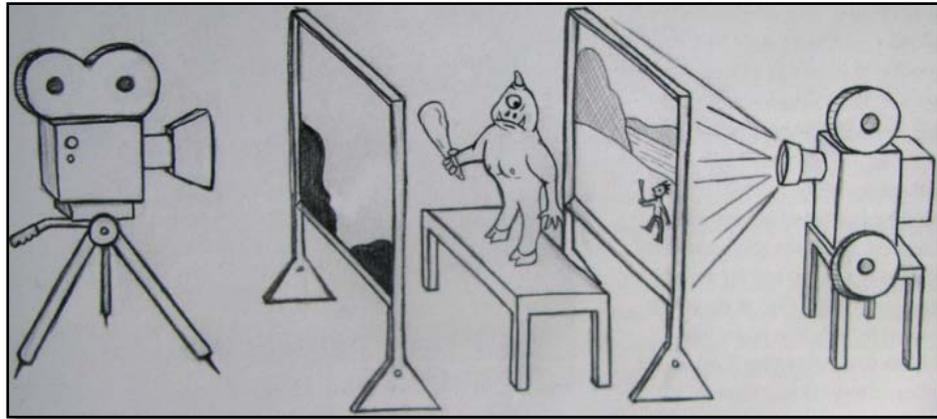


Figure 12. An Illustration of rear-projection set up. Source: Priebe, p.13 (2007)

Another example would be the camera. Like everything else, 3D computer animation actually tries to simulate the properties of a real camera where stop-motion incorporates a live one. In *Wall-E's*, a full 3D CG animation, *behind the scenes* documentary, the filmmakers experiment on real cameras and lenses to better understand how the camera works and perfectly implement the depth of field.<sup>100</sup> However since it is a simulation, it can go beyond the real thing. Thus again 3D has more freedom, both in camera movements and properties, lenses etc. This has the benefit of more extreme camera angles, movements and sizes where camera can theoretically be anywhere which helps giving the filmmaker the option of more “point of views” thus more options to better tell the story. Moreover, the trend in animation “lead to the direct mimicking of the (highly exaggerated) naturalism of live-action film”, almost like in silent live-action cinema era.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Ken A. Priebe, *The Art of Stop-Motion Animation* (USA, Thomson Course Technology, 2007), 13.

<sup>100</sup> *Wall-E*, DVD, directed by Andrew Stanton, behind the scenes featurette (2008, USA, Pixar Animation Studios, Walt Disney Pictures).

<sup>101</sup> Paul Wells, *Understanding Animation* (London and New York, Routledge, 1998), 105.

It could be summed up to that; believable “supernatural” had been possible in live-action with the use of animation and it had probably been the driving force for the animaton technology’s evolution. On a side note it should be added that ‘animation’ is not the only way for a believable ‘supernatural’ in some cases, especially when the verbal storytelling is the main drive in the story that leaves it up to the imagination of the audience or when ‘fantasy’ involved does not need such effects. A good example to both of that would be an independent film, ‘The Man from Earth’<sup>102</sup> where the story goes around a man who is in a room with colleagues and a student from university and claims that he is actually 14000 years old. (Fig. 13)



Figure 13. Still from *The Man from Earth* Note: Copyright Falling Sky Entertainment

Apart from its use in visual effects, on the other hand, animation has also been adopted as a separate storytelling medium and new codes have emerged with every new technique without making the previous one obsolete. They all have had different feels mostly because of their proximities to reality and qualities in abstraction as well as their ability in reaching the extremes.

Jim Thacker, editor of *3D World* criticizes ‘English-speaking world’s reluctance of mixing these techniques in feature animations, proposing that blending them will create more artistic freedom.<sup>103</sup> It seems like it has already started to happen. With the implementation of rapid printing of facial expressions through a 3D printer in ‘Coraline’

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<sup>102</sup> *Man from Earth*, DVD, directed by Richard Schenkman (2007, USA, Falling Sky Entertainment, Anchor Bay Entertainment).

<sup>103</sup> Jim Thacker “Editor’s Perspective”, *3D World*, (April 2009): 7.

and the *performance-capture* used in 'Beowulf'<sup>104</sup> (Fig. 14) and many other examples before those from the rest of the world, the borders seems to be getting crossed even more, opening up new opportunities and creating new spaces for visual storytelling. There is just not one single perfect tool for everything. It is up to the filmmaker to decide which tool will best serve his/her story.



Figure 14. Still from *Beowulf*, 2007 Note: Copyright: Image Movers

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<sup>104</sup> *Beowulf*, DVD, directed by Robert Zemeckis (2007, USA, Image Movers, Warner Bros.).

## DISCUSSION ON SHORT FILMS

### “Rabbit! Rabbit!”, “The Curtains” and “Watt”

“Every book is an image of solitude”  
Paul Auster<sup>105</sup>

I have shot three short films to accompany the research material and to have a hands-on experience on the issues that have been discussed above. However, it should be noted that the way that I have done these films and my interpretation of the achieved effects are largely personal, experimental in nature and are based upon personal choices. There is no possibility and thus no suggestion of a “one true way” to use the medium based on my findings and experiences in these short film projects.

In all films, one specific media approach construed above has been employed; “Rabbit! Rabbit!” is a stop-motion animation film utilizing hand-made clay puppets and sets; “The Curtains” is a live-action film with an actor in two different roles; “Watt the Table Lamp” is a 3D CG animation film. The three films do not tell the exact same story; rather I have decided to tell stories suitable to every one of them. However, for the sake of its unity, the stories walk around common grounds.

I have decided to base all three stories on the main theme of ‘solitude’. The choice is not only personal but also because it is a universal theme that has many versions which I thought would be adaptable to different settings and media. I have also chosen it because I believe that loneliness is at the very core of fictional storytelling. One might argue that films are not that way since they are mostly made with a crew but again the creation of the story is a solitary process; it is the writer, pen and paper.

To be able to tell a better story of ‘solitude’ I have tried to adapt the theme to each technique’s strengths. Therefore, although all protagonists in all films suffer from desolation, the reasons are various. The old man in “Rabbit! Rabbit!” has lost his wife, which is tipped to the audience at the start of the film with a quote from E.A Poe from a letter he wrote:

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<sup>105</sup> Paul Auster, *The Invention of Solitude* (England, Mackays of Chatham plc, 2005), 145.

“Each time I felt all the agonies of her death--and at each accession of the disorder I loved her more dearly & clung to her life with more desperate pertinacity. But I am constitutionally sensitive--nervous in a very unusual degree. I became insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity.”<sup>106</sup>

The difference from Poe’s situation is that, the old man has already lost his wife. However, he also is about to go insane from his desperation and desolation as he lives alone in a forest cabin away from anybody else. I believed this story would go very well with the stop-motion technique. The decaying nature and atmosphere of the story-space would fit perfectly to the imperfect, ‘gritty’ and cracked surfaces of clay characters and likewise imperfect settings handmade with mostly recycled materials and clay. I think this warmth of proximity to reality, adds value to the establishment of sympathy for the character to draw the audience inside the story.



Figure 15. Old man and rabbit in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*

In “Watt”, the story could be interpreted as an allegory of modern day loneliness. The protagonist is an anthropomorphic table lamp. It has a flaw though; it fears dark and ghosts. Apparently the ghosts are afraid of the light as well since they can exist only in the dark which is based on countless ghost stories that has been written and told. In this story, the character is sitting in a protective sphere that it can create for itself thanks to its technological advantage; the ‘light bulb’. On the other hand, the character’s loneliness stems from this protective sphere, fearing the ones that are different, that are ‘others’ with no real basis of its fear. That way, it is alienating others, eventually

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<sup>106</sup> E.A. Poe “Edgar Allan Poe to George W. Eveleth - January 4, 1848”, 1848, <http://www.eapoe.org/works/LETTERS/P4801040.HTM> (accessed May 25,2009)

alienating itself. However, when unplugged, thus stripped from his armor, it has to face that phobia. I figured 3D CG animation would be the best way to tell this story visually. Surely, I wouldn't be able to do it with live-action. As for stop-motion, I thought a shiny, minimal, sterile and perfectionist style that would be realistically achievable with CG would suit more to the futuristic, or modern at the least, feel of the story and would better reflect the character of the protagonist that is highly prone to brag with its robotic abilities.



Figure 16. Watt the table lamp hunting ghosts in *Watt*

The original short story which “The Curtains” is based on belongs to Münire Bozdemir. I have written the screenplay. The story evolves from a writer’s loneliness. This time the loneliness is a voluntary one however. E. A. Poe's short story “The Man of the Crowd” starts with a quotation by Jean de La Bruyere: “Such a great misfortune, not to be able to be alone”.<sup>107</sup> This quotation summarizes how important it is for people to have the freedom of being alone. On the other hand, when we take the fact that humans are social beings into consideration, it also makes us realize the contradiction lying in there which is; too much of voluntary solitude may bring about desolation. In “Invention of Solitude”, Auster quotes from Pascal: “All the unhappiness of man stems from one thing only: that he is incapable of staying quietly in his room”.<sup>108</sup>

The writer in the story of “The Curtains” suffers from writer’s block and is obsessed with words. However the privacy he has created for himself entraps him, forcing him to

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<sup>107</sup> E.A. Poe, *Bütün Hikayeleri* (İstanbul, İthaki Yayınları, 2002), 299.

<sup>108</sup> Paul Auster, *The Invention of Solitude* (England, Mackays of Chatham plc, 2005), 80.

face himself in a surreal setting and does not let it go outside to where the real life people are. I thought that shooting this film in live-action would work best since I wanted to show genuine human emotions even when there was not any action, through the gaze of the actor which is very hard to achieve in animation, also the use of animation in that character would be unnecessary and luxurious.

It could be said that, these would be my main guidelines in selecting the theme of 'loneliness' and matching each story with a specific technique. Most of the remaining choices were aimed at sustaining the efficiency of each of these stories. Even though all of the protagonists' problems are related to their loneliness, like their reasons the way they are trying to solve those problems are also different which gives them different goals. To be able to drive the stories, I have decided to set the goals of the 'heroes' as early as possible in the films and tried to drive the stories through intriguing conflicts.

In "The Curtains" the main goal of the protagonist is to finish his story. His struggle with himself turns into a conflict between him and the 'words' floating in the room that won't come to him and that don't want to be wasted. Later, feeling the room is strangling him with its dark closed curtains, the conflict switches metaphorically to the curtains, thus the room. Finally it evolves into his two selves again which was in fact the way it has been from the beginning. The characters of his two selves are also different as well. One is the real he, the other is what he wants to be. It is not revealed to the audience which is which and the surreal journey in his mind ends abruptly leaving the conclusion up to the spectator.

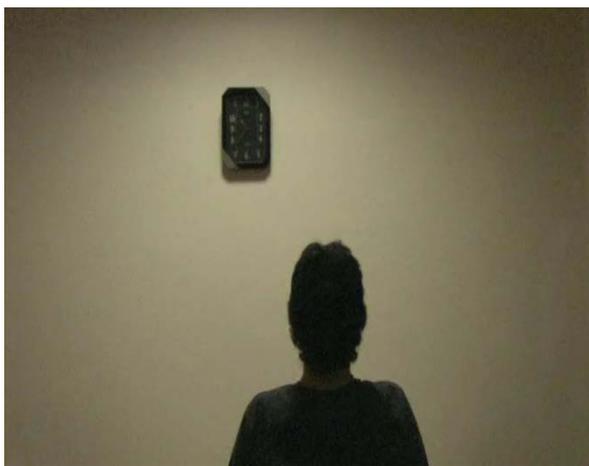


Figure 17. Writer and the stopped clock in *The Curtains*



Figure 18. The Writer suffering from writer's block in *The Curtains*

In “Watt”, the aim of the table lamp is to be relieved from its fear by being under an abundant room light which has been taken from it by a dark, scary looking human silhouette. There is a conflict between the ghosts and *Watt* which continues in a ‘hide & seek’ style. There is a conflict between light and dark. There is also the conflict between the new and the old and other contradictory visual elements could be observed reinforcing that. *Watt*, the robotic table lamp has been stuck between future and past as it is not only fearing ghosts but also surrounded by lots of massive sized books and nothing else. Though we do not see *Watt* reading the books in the film, this gives a feeling that it, from time to time, peeks at them. We can sense his loneliness with the wide shots at the start of the film. Moreover, though the floor has a shiny surface, the wallpapers seem quite old such as the case in the contradiction of gleaming look of the 3D table lamp and the hand drawn two dimensional, paper look of the ghosts.

“Rabbit! Rabbit!” which I also have written together with Bozdemir, starts with the old man’s catching of a rabbit. He has no malevolence; he only wants a friend to accompany him, something that he can communicate even if it does not understand him. As its nature urges however, the rabbit escapes at the first opportunity and that opportunity arises when the old man tries to make the rabbit comfortable with a cushion. There, the vigilant conflict starts between the rabbits and the man.



Figure 19. Old man's short relief ends with the realization that a rabbit is sitting next to him on the tree trunk, from *Rabbit! Rabbit!*



Figure 20. Table lamp pulls out a round-kick in *Watt*

The title of the film refers to Alfred Bester's science fiction novel "Tiger! Tiger!"<sup>109</sup> thus to William Blake poem "The Tiger"<sup>110</sup>. The book tells the story of an 'ordinary' man turning into a 'tiger', a hunter with revenge in his heart. Therefore there is a bit of humor employed within the film's title as within the film, the rabbits become the real predators. The theme of solitude drove each film to be dark and depressing in their make-up however I have noticed myself to be implementing humor and fun factor in the animated shorts. That would be intriguing to note in the context of discussion of the general expectations from animation previously discussed. As a student filmmaker, I feel that I had the opportunity and joy of being playful in the construction of the story. I believe that's a bit easier to do and acceptable in animation than in live-action since the animation audience readily accepts absurdities as long as it is consistent within its own context.

I believe many people would find "Rabbit! Rabbit!", as very dark in tone for an animation where some may find it playful. That's the effect I was trying to achieve as I have deeply been inspired by the works of Tim Burton and Henry Selick films such as "Nightmare before Christmas" and "Corpse Bride" which I believe employ a similar tone. Yet again, I might consider it a bit darker than both of the aforementioned director's works and perhaps somewhat closer to Brothers Quay films. (Fig. 20)



Figure 21. Still from *Street of Crocodiles*  
Note: Copyright Brothers Quay

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<sup>109</sup> Alfred Bester, *Kaplan! Kaplan!* (İstanbul, Altıkırkbeş Yayın, 2000)

<sup>110</sup> William Blake "The Tiger" <http://www.bartleby.com/101/489.html> (accessed May 26,2009)

As a common genre of the films, I have selected supernatural horror which I believed to work very well with the dark tone of the films I desired to achieve. Thus it could be said that reason why I chose this genre would be half personal but also one fourth practical and one fourth contextual.

To start with the practical one, which would overlap more with the writing part of this thesis, I believe that supernatural horror, as H.P. Lovecraft states, demands a certain degree of imagination and a capacity for detachment from every-day life from the audience<sup>111</sup> thus would go very well to the alternative realism of animation-space that requires a similar imagination. This quality has given me an opportunity to experiment in each film technique as supernatural horror can be created equally well both with the use of animated creatures or psychological qualities without using special effects. Additionally, I think there is something scary in animation itself, especially with stop-motion as it brings inanimate or in other words 'dead' real life objects to life.

Unsurprisingly animation techniques have been used in many horror films, to make ghost, monsters, and the like. 'Evil Dead'<sup>112</sup> is a horror film that utilizes stop-motion technique for that. (Fig. 21) In "Rabbit! Rabbit!" there are lots of referential scenes to that movie such as the scene where the earth rises with an under-light though it is red in that movie (Fig. 22) and blue in "Rabbit! Rabbit!" (Fig. 23) to give it a happy instead of a scary look. The scene where the camera flies fast towards the house is another one of those. It has been one of my favorite horror films as I have first watched the Evil Dead series as a child, which was one of the first horror movies I have watched and have been very thrilled by it. I have tried to use other references to mythical, spectral, metaphysical beings as well. Such as the vampire rabbits in "Rabbit! Rabbit!", the ghosts in "Watt" or author's other self in "The Curtains". I have also used other emotional cues by using of music or other elements like lightning.

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<sup>111</sup> H.P Lovecraft, *The Annotated Supernatural Horror in Literature* (New York, Hippocampus Press, 2000), 21.

<sup>112</sup> *Evil Dead*, DVD, directed by Sam Raimi (1981, USA, Renaissance Pictures, Anchor Bay Entertainment)



Figure 22. A Stop-motion 'undead' in *Evil Dead II* Copyright: Anchor Bay Entertainment



Figure 23. Earth rising with underlight in *Evil Dead* Copyright: Anchor Bay Entertainment



Figure 24. Earth rising with underlight in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*

However in doing so, my aim was not to scare the audience. Therefore, I have tried to play a lot with those ideas to come up with equally cute, if not funny, monsters that are not really fearful but rather likeable.

Contextually, I believe, horror is very parallel to loneliness as it could be said that fear overcomes man more when he is alone. In many horror films and stories victims get hunted when they are separated from their group. Moreover, Lovecraft argues that: The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is the fear of the unknown<sup>113</sup>. The words 'unknown' and 'alone' could be said to be very parallel; as if it is 'unknown', either nobody experienced it or whoever experienced it can't share it, making the action a lone experience for anybody else. The ultimate fear of the unknown -thus the source of many other fears- which is 'death' is

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<sup>113</sup> H.P Lovecraft, *The Annotated Supernatural Horror in Literature* (New York, Hippocampus Press, 2000), 21.

experienced alone like Donnie says in the movie ‘Donnie Darko’: Everybody dies alone.<sup>114</sup>

The horror topic is also interesting when looked together with the animation technique. Returning back to the definition of how animation is having perfect control over the environment, objects and subjects, it could be said that it is highly related to our fears of the unknown as it is uncontrollable. May be the fear of death could even be one of the reasons why animation technique has been invented; as humankind’s answer to death. A consolation, even though it is illusionary.

Another aspect that I like in and was inspired by many Burton films is that, the scary characters, ‘others’ and ‘outcasts’ are not really ill disposed. Even though they perform or are weird things by general standards, they are good in heart. Edward in the movie “Edward Scissorhands”<sup>115</sup> for instance is an uncompleted ‘Frankenstein monster’ carrying scissors for hands. However he is much more innocent from ‘normal’ human beings in the film that exclude or exploit him. (Fig. 26) I have tried to implement this in my short films as neither of the ghosts, the vampire rabbits, ‘words’ are malevolent. In fact I tried to avoid portraying characters as pure evil or pure good but rather tried to depict them as they are with personas of their own. They represent personalities that belong to a rather ‘grey line’ that is more evident in real life than that of strict ‘black and white’ entrenched characters.



Figure 25. One of the ghosts in *Watt*

In camerawork I tried to avoid extreme freeform movements as I thought it would alienate the audience from the gloomy side of the story. I have also experienced that utilizing a moving camera in stop-motion animation is very hard to accomplish without

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<sup>114</sup> *Donnie Darko*, DVD, directed by Richard Kelly (2001, USA, Pandora Cinema, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment)

<sup>115</sup> *Edward Scissorhands*, DVD, directed by Tim Burton (1990, USA, 20th Century Fox)

the appropriate equipment not only because the set's miniature size providing a limited space but also because of the frame by frame nature of the film, thus the scenes where there is even slight camera moves had been a real challenge unlike the other films. However, even in "Watt" where an ultimate freedom of camera movement is possible, there is almost no extreme camera behavior used to also prevent a distraction from the theme. The hardest shot to achieve in other formats would perhaps be in the scene where camera was falling in 90 degrees directly onto a highly reflective surface. (Fig. 27)



Figure 26. Edward in *Edward Scissorhands*  
Note: Copyright Twentieth Century Fox



Figure 27. Camera falling on a ghost in *Watt*

The function of 'paraproxemics' in film has previously been discussed. The function could be observed in animated films as well and based on the outcome in the films I think it is a great tool to draw the audience into the story. The scene in "Rabbit! Rabbit!" where the rabbit escapes from the cage and the picture of the deceased wife drops on the floor, the camera slowly moves away from the character revealing more of the emptiness of the forest cabin thus stressing more on the sentimental outburst. (Fig. 28) Right after that scene, the point of view is from under a table showing the old man's fast footsteps. The view represents a cowering posture of hiding under a cover waiting for the danger to pass. For a while there is only sound coming from the hunting rifle and the man walks back the scene ends with the sound of a slamming of a door. (Fig. 29) Many animated films start with the camera flying into the fantasy world which helps the audience in getting into the reality of story-space. In "Watt" it again goes in to the story space, but not towards, but rather backwards as if it is not really desired but as scared,

taking a few steps back which I would believe expresses that the story is not a dream but a nightmare (which ends happy).

Technically, I have found stop-motion to be the most challenging among all three forms and that it was mostly a problem solving process after the mind had been set on how to tell the story. It thus required a lot more pre-planning than other mentioned media due to its mostly irreversible nature. After a shot is done, it is very hard and most of the time almost impossible to fix some little problem that can ruin the illusion. However, the above statement does not say that everything is done easily in other mediums. It would be stating the obvious to say that computer animation makes many things easier. On the other hand, the realism (credibility) of textures, lights, shadows which are readily available in stop-motion animation required a great deal of work to get right in 3D CG animation. It should be added that the credibility I mention here is not photorealism but an internal consistency. I aimed at a certain level of sympathetic likeability that could be observed in films of Michel Gondry. On a final note, I should add that I have found directing the real actor to be harder, though less time-consuming, than directing puppets or modeled CGI characters in depicting the exact image created on mind.



Figure 28. Old man stands desperate in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*



Figure 29. Hiding point of view in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*

In all of the films I have also wanted to try and experiment with breaking the boundaries between the techniques to try the possibilities in delivering the story. Therefore I have used green-screen techniques and 3D animation to create the ‘weird’ story-space in “The Curtains”. Animation has also made the moving words in the room possible. I have applied 2D hand drawn ghosts as motion graphics to be able to better

stress the tension between fear and the phobic, old and the new, the mechanical and the metaphysical which also helped in enforcing the concept of 'the other'. In "Rabbit! Rabbit!" I did not want to intrude too much in to the story space and avoided use of 3D CGI which would look odd, yet to make it seem believable I had painted the gun smoke effect and digitally manipulated the window displacement scene frame by frame over the photographs in the image editing software.

## CONCLUSION

I am aware that these projects would be a personal 'journey' from the very beginning. My passion was to tell stories using the film medium where the audience would get into the illusion, to enjoy, to think about and to relate with storytelling. In this one and a half year period, I have managed to fit this paper and three short films, I have learned a great deal both technically and theoretically on making stop-motion, 3D "CG" animation and live-action films as well as hybrids of them. I gained a much wider perspective generally on making films which will hopefully help me to make better films in the future. Since, it is impossible to do all of these projects at the same time as my learning curve was continuous, resulting for my interpretations to be retrospective. I constantly tried to judge, re-judge and interpret my own work based on new things that I have ascertained. I can conclude that both my works and my interpretations of them are a reflection of the experiences I had so far. Thus the limitations should also be taken into consideration as it was my first experience in using 3D animation as well as green screen techniques in telling a story. I believe as I shaped and worked on my films to make them communicate the stories better, thus the films I have shaped and worked on me to make me a better storyteller.

Apart from being a comparative interpretation and technical analysis on three different techniques, the project also runs over supernatural horror to journey into human loneliness and tries to approach it from a neutral point of view to remark the contradiction between the man's need and fear of solitude in addition to the role and necessity of solitude in the creative process. Furthermore, this paper also functions as a survey into the necessity, tasks, reflections and techniques of storytelling, all in all, as a tribute to the storytelling and storytellers.

All of the three techniques used in the projects, like all tools of storytelling, have their unique properties and features which should be taken into consideration when deciding which one will be used. It is up to the filmmaker to decide. It is all about creating the charming illusion of a good story in the used medium as Neil Gaiman says: It's the moments of magic that people will always remember.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Neil Gaiman "'All the rules are turned upside down.'" by Gina McIntyre, The Hollywood Reporter September 2005, [http://www.neilgaiman.com/p/About\\_Neil/Interviews/Neil\\_Gaiman:\\_%27All\\_the\\_rules\\_are\\_turned\\_upside\\_down.%27\\_by\\_Gina\\_McIntyre,\\_The\\_Hollywood\\_Reporter\\_\(September\\_2005\)](http://www.neilgaiman.com/p/About_Neil/Interviews/Neil_Gaiman:_%27All_the_rules_are_turned_upside_down.%27_by_Gina_McIntyre,_The_Hollywood_Reporter_(September_2005)) (accessed May 31,2009)

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APPENDIX A



Figure 30. Rabbit prowling for carrot in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*



Figure 31. Old Man walking towards window in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*



Figure 32. The Owl in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*



Figure 33. Making the Old Man in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*



Figure 34. Making the Rabbit in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*



Figure 35. Building the set of *Rabbit! Rabbit!* with co-writer, co-animator and co-director Münire Bozdemir



Figure 36. Making the furniture of *Rabbit! Rabbit!*



Figure 37. Armchair in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*



Figure 38. Bed in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*



Figure 39. Night stand and pieces of cloth coming to life in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*



Figure 40. Stuffed rabbit head in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*



Figure 41. Vampire rabbits in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*

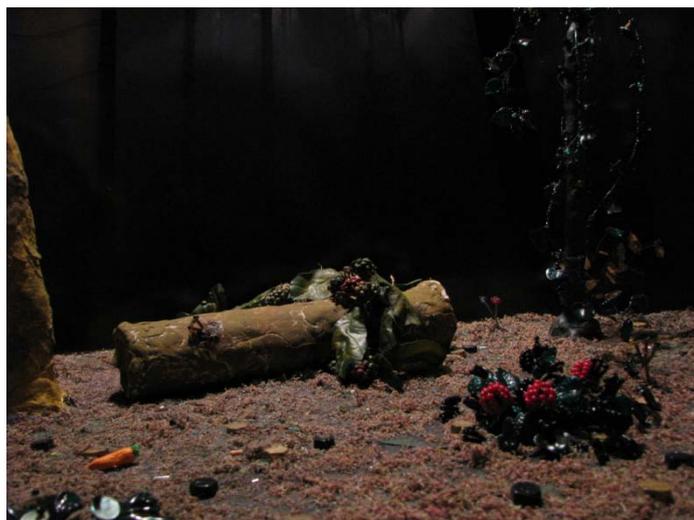


Figure 42. Part of the exterior set of *Rabbit! Rabbit!*



Figure 43. Interior set of *Rabbit! Rabbit!*



Figure 44. Animating the old man frame by frame in *Rabbit! Rabbit!* with co-animator and co-director Münire Bozdemir



Figure 45. Making the tree trunk from empty soda cans and clay in *Rabbit! Rabbit!*



Figure 46. Composer Mine Sunkar at the recording the soundtrack of *Rabbit! Rabbit!*

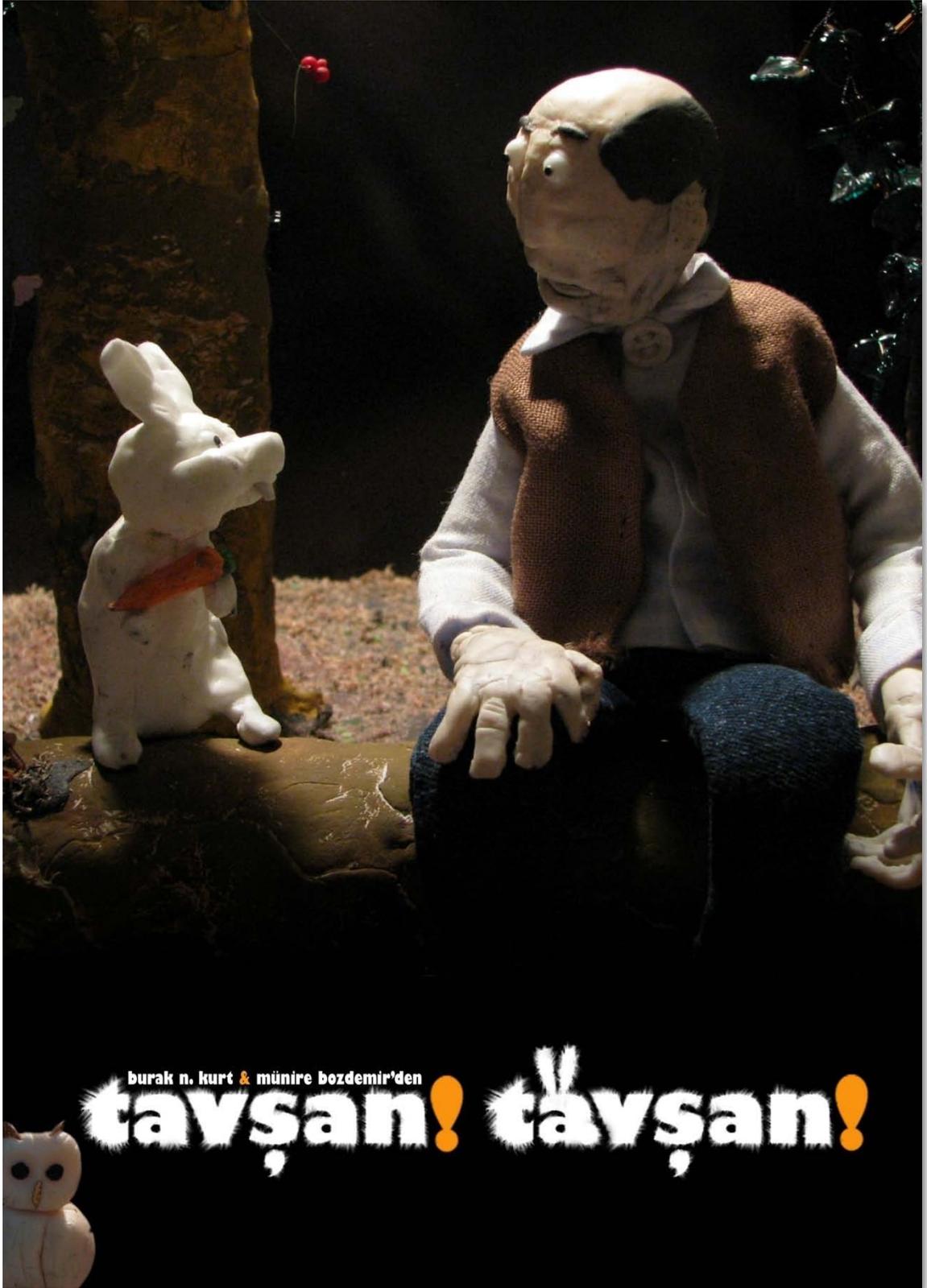


Figure 47. poster of *Rabbit! Rabbit!*



Figure 48. Watt meets the ghost in *Watt*



Figure 49. Watt falls to the ground in the scene where physics were simulated manually in *Watt*

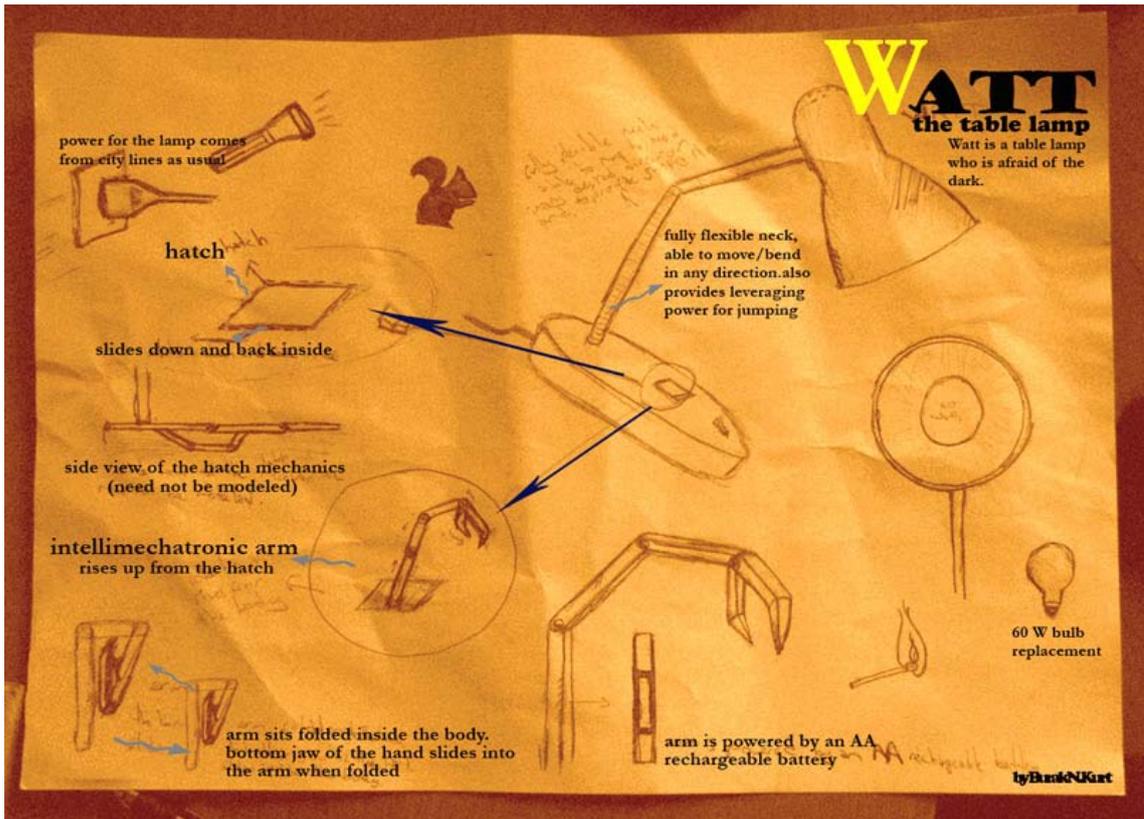


Figure 50. First design sketches of Watt

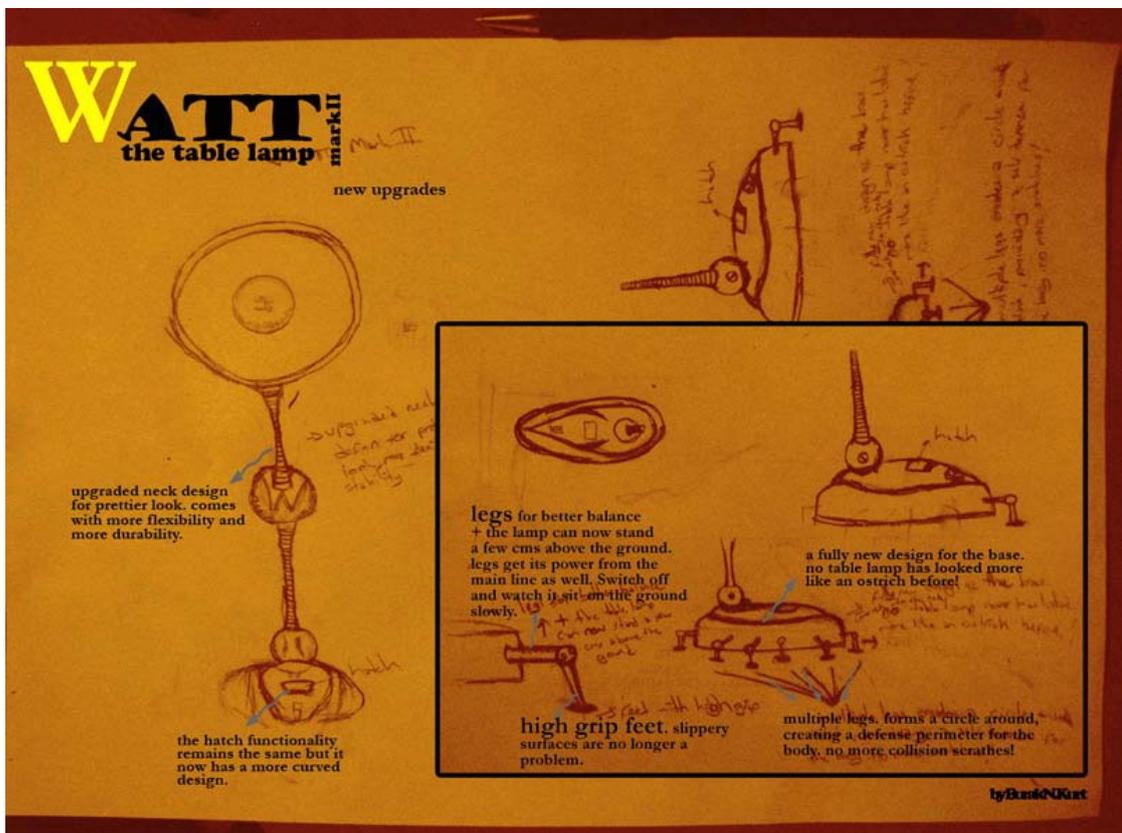


Figure 51. Final sketches of Watt

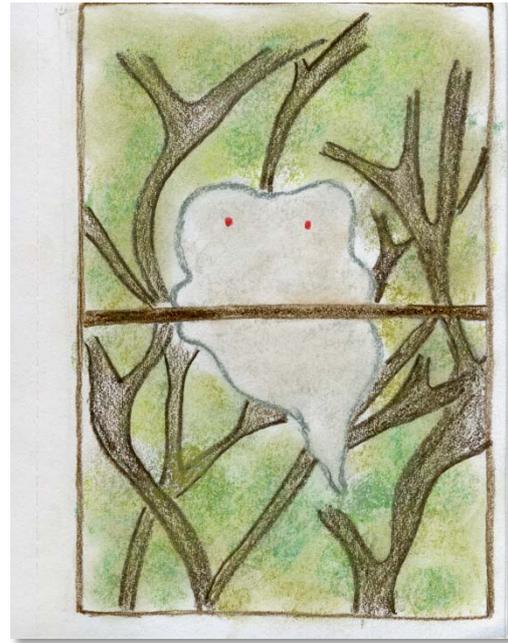
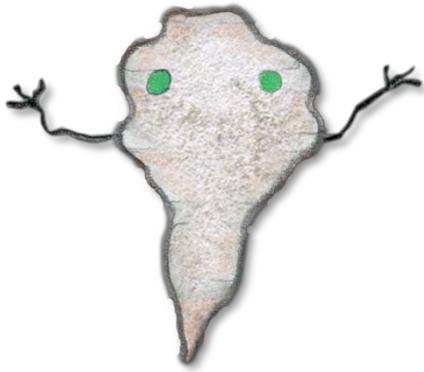


Figure 52-53. Ghosts of *Watt* handdrawn on paper by Münire Bozdemir and used as they are in the film.



Figure 54-55. Scary human silhouettes created from actual photographs taken for *Watt*

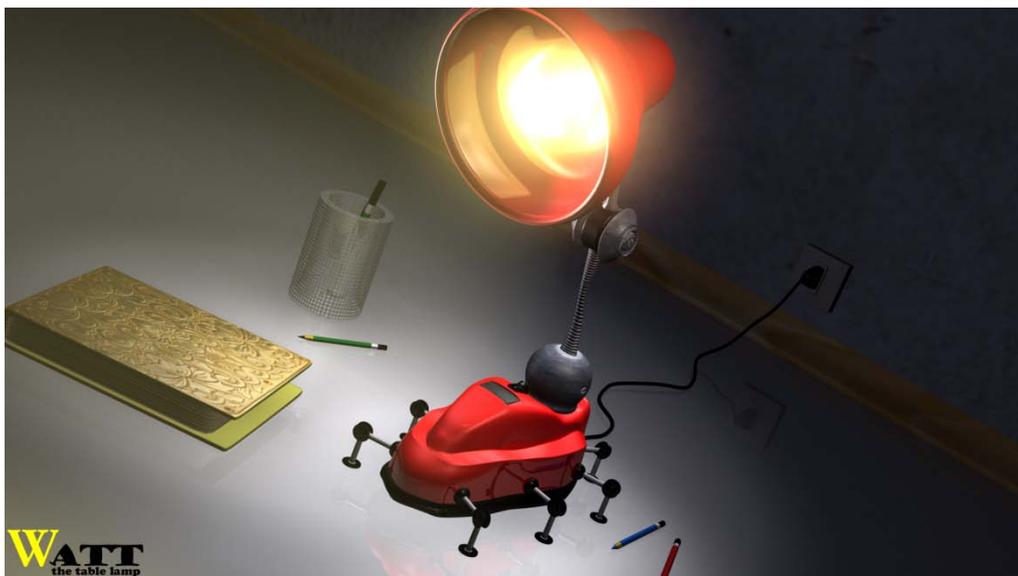
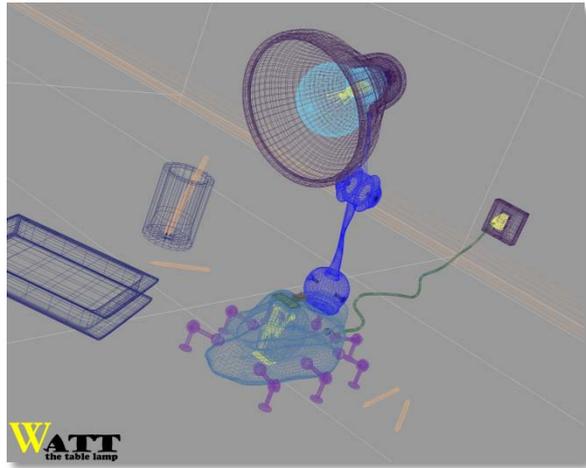


Figure 56-58. Wireframe, shade and final test renders of *Watt*

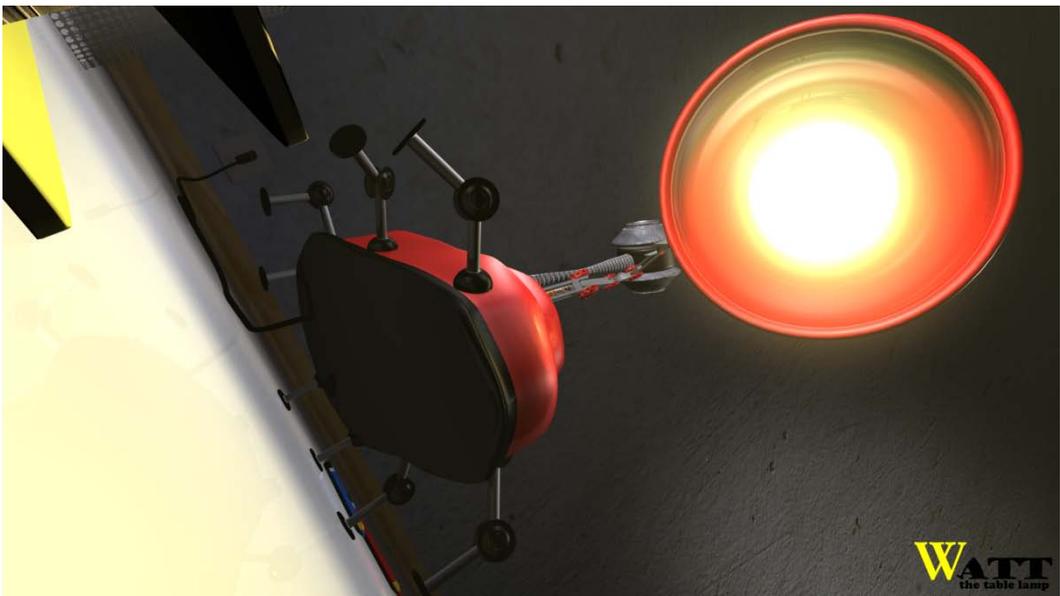
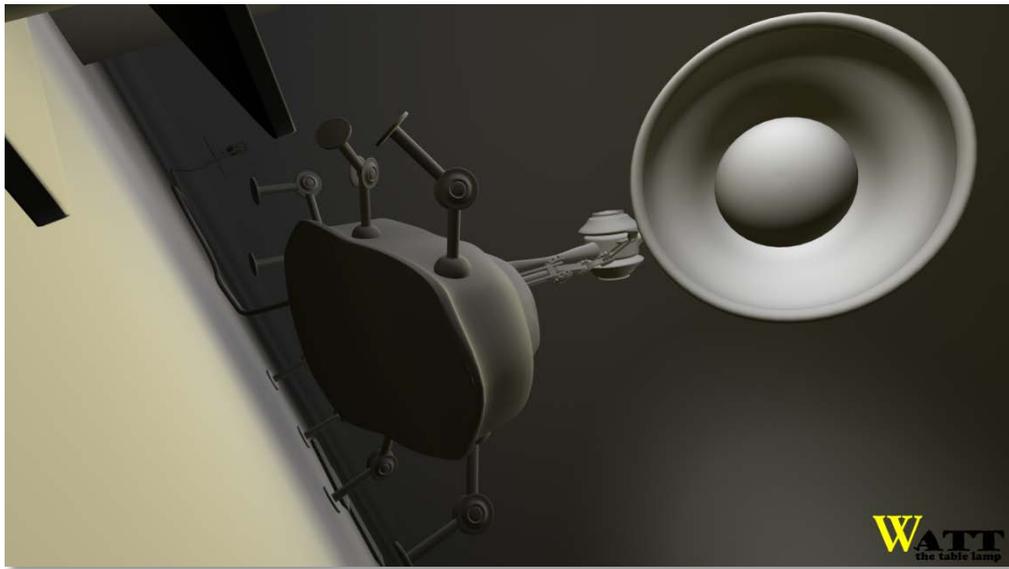
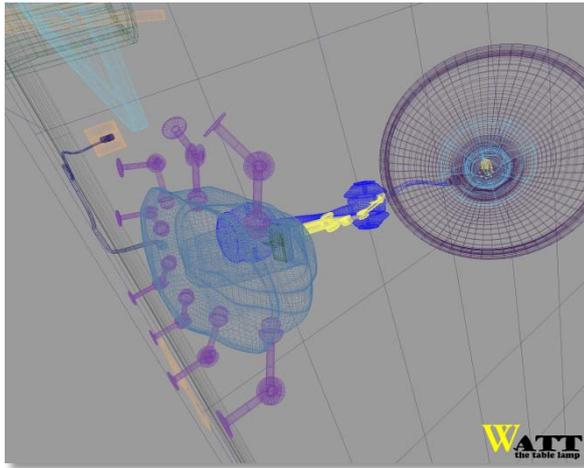


Figure 59-61. Wireframe, shade and final test renders of *Watt*

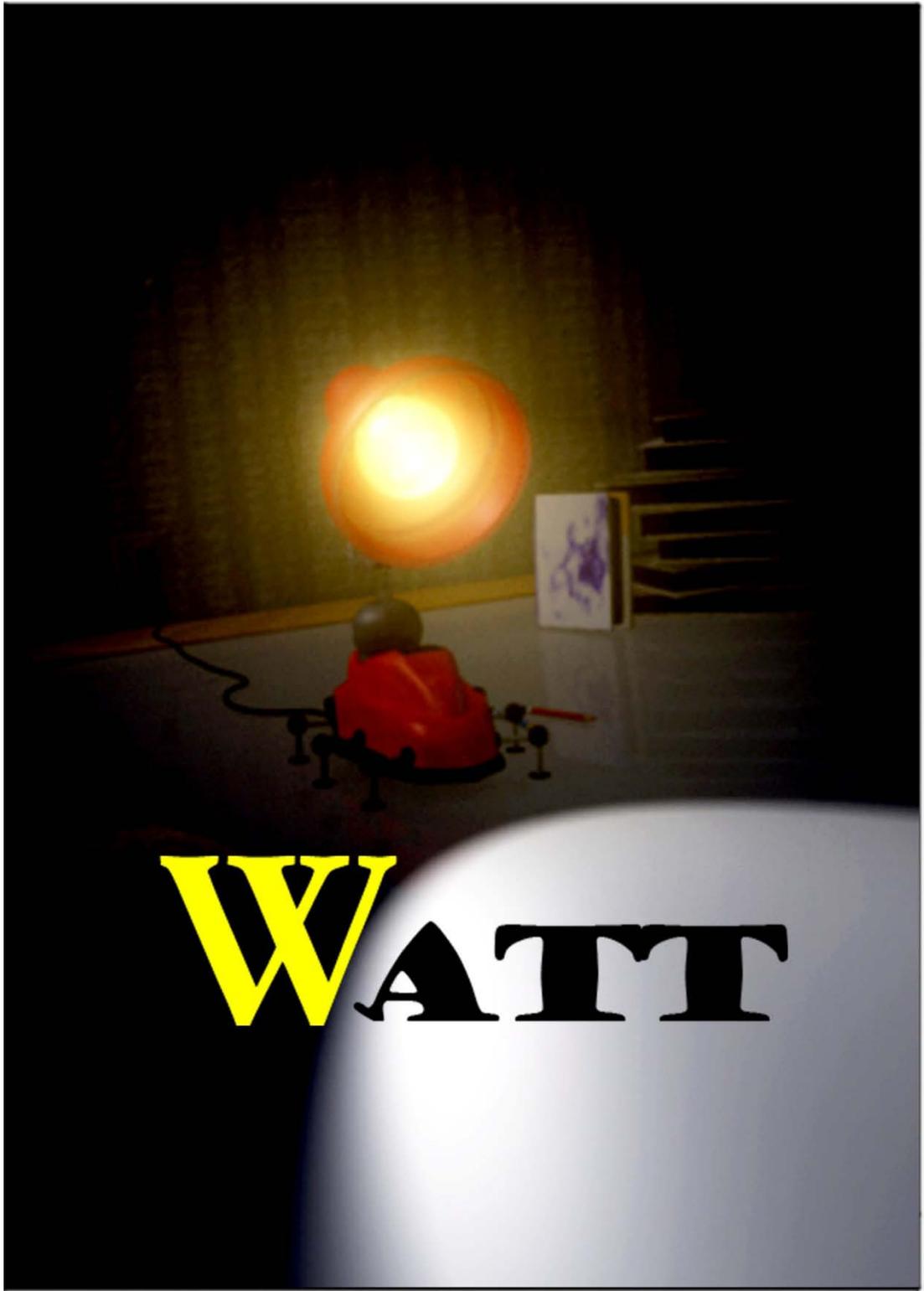


Figure 62. Poster of *Watt*

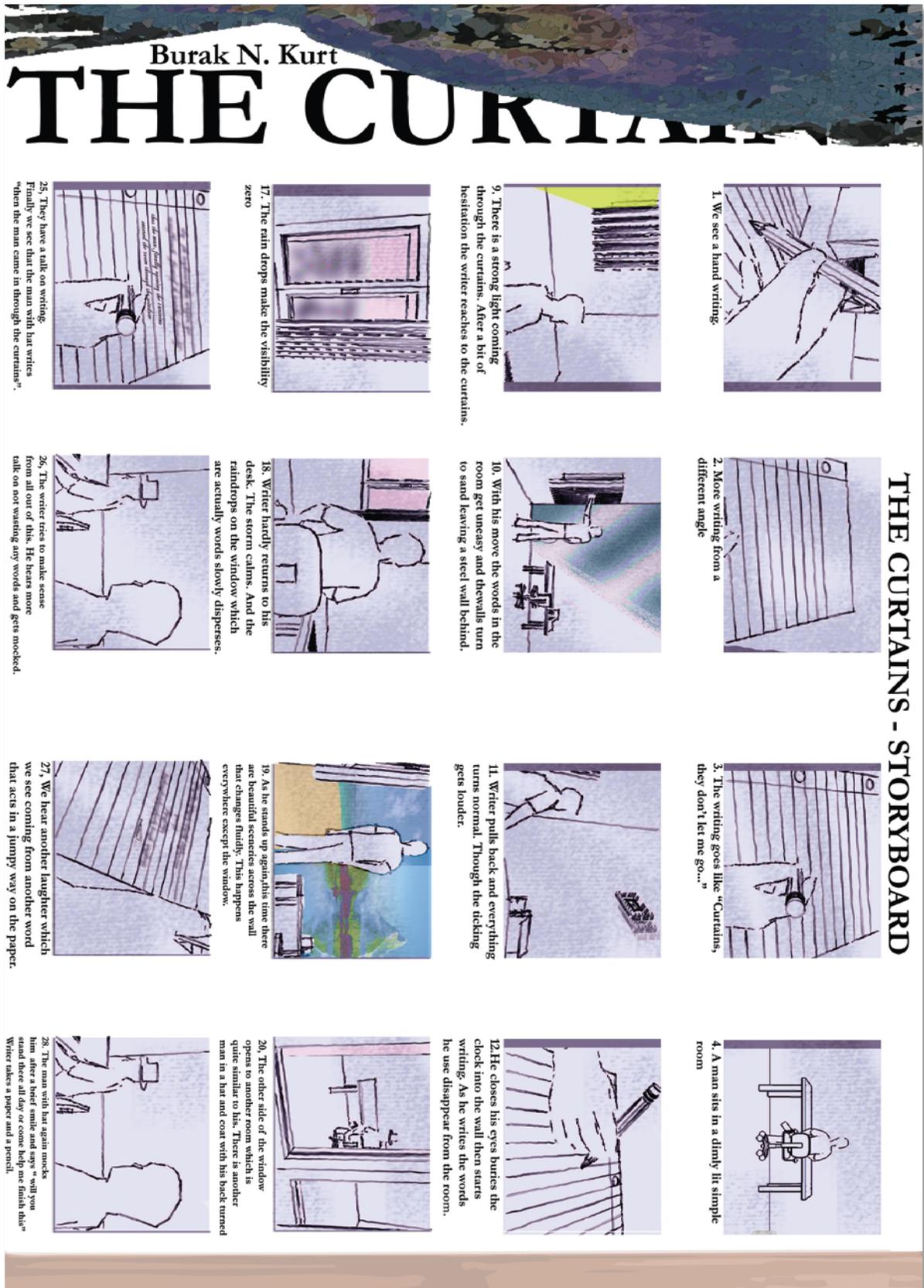


Figure 63. *The Curtains* Storyboard- 1

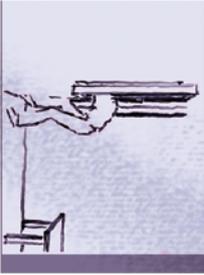
# THE CURTAINS - STORYBOARD



5. The man is a writer. There is a paper written halfway and a pencil on a wooden table



13. Suddenly, not liking what he just wrote, he scratches the words, scraps the paper and throws it on the floor.



21. Writer hesitantly climbs through the windows



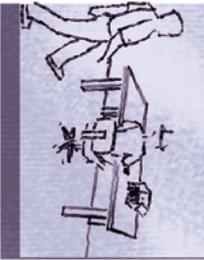
29. We see a hand not certain whether the writer's or the 'man with hat's writing the end to the page.



6. When we see the room in wide angle we see words floating slowly in the room's space.



14. The other words gets uneasy, makes a screeching sound and turns to red. Writer takes his head in his hands with a sudden headache.



22. He goes slowly towards the man with hat. The parquet of the floor squeaks with each step. He sees B is writing something but can't read what



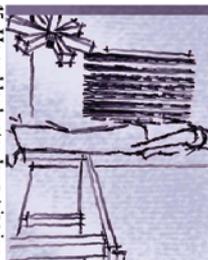
E. A. Poe's short story "The Man of the Crowd" starts with a quotation by Jean de la Bruyere: "Ce grand malheur, de ne pouvoir être seul" which means "Such a great misfortune, not to be able to be alone." This quotation summarizes how important it is for people to have the freedom of being alone. On the other hand, when we take the fact that humans are social beings into consideration, it also makes us realize that we have been living in a big contradiction. We want to be alone while, at the same time, having loneliness as our biggest fear. Nobody wants to be alone at the time of death, although everybody dies alone. We are trying to set up an ambiguous balance which might not even exist. Most of the time we either cannot achieve that balance or we convince ourselves that we have achieved. Sometimes we are attracted by the idea of running away, sometimes we wish to "stay" eternally. We are travelling back and forth among the contradictions we have created in ourselves which might be a natural part of being a human or may be even our spiritual evolution.

This short film project aims to talk about this genuine human emotion, not with a direct approach but rather pointing it as a subject that could be read under another story, the story of a writer who is suffering a writer's block. Writers' as well as artists' loneliness is mostly chosen by well known those departed by death and etc. It may be both together or they may be other reasons such as being an outcast. However, whatever the reason may be, the effect is never easy to bear with. Other subjects are also laid inside the story such as the fiction/reality question.

The writer is an insanely genius man, in fact an insane genius that lives in his own world. He is living in the contradiction of 'to stay and to escape'. To choose between loneliness and crowds, his world and the others'. Trying to break through, get out of his room, in other words to be a 'man of the crowd' and write the end of his own story. A man obsessed with words and the window curtains of his room which symbolizes an escape from both his state of mind and his situation. He has his battles in his mind but he does not know which side he fights for. Or maybe he does better than we do, us, the authors of our own life stories.



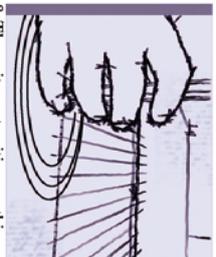
7. We see a clock on the wall ticking loudly



15. He suddenly stands up tripping the chair over.



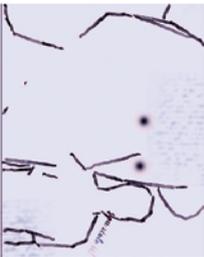
23. He tries to look over his shoulder. The man with hat turns around and he sees that the man looks just like him but with a hat and a coat.



8. The writer not writing anything taps his pencil on the table in rhythm with the ticking clock



16. Writer opens the curtains to the end and a rigorous storm starts inside the room. Writer ducks and tries to cover his face.



24. Writer says "you stole it" and the man with hat replies "no!" with a bold and calm voice. The words the writer speaks appear from his mouth and punctly fades away.

# CURTAINS

Figure 64. The Curtains Storyboard - 2



Figure 65-66. Set photos from *The Curtains*



Figure 67-68. Set photos from *The Curtains*



Figure 69. Set and crew photos from The Curtains

## **APPENDIX B**

DVD containing films, *Rabbit! Rabbit!*, *Watt*, *The Curtains*

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