

‘Redefining the Anthropomorphic Animal in Animation’

by

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Abstract:

The use of anthropomorphic animal characters is pervasive in animation, but there has been little examination of how and why these are created, and how a viewing audience understands them. This Practice-based PhD examines how a re-defining of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representation might bring a new impetus to the use of animal imagery within contemporary animation practice.

An initial stage of research was to define the term anthropomorphism both as a visual language within animation practice and in the wider contexts of scientific and philosophical discourse. Social and psychological aspects are discussed, recognising this form of hybrid representation throughout the development of human culture.

Links with Human Animal Studies disciplines raised the question of relating anthropomorphism to negative aspects of anthropocentrism and this led to a second stage of the research that explores ways of working with anthropomorphism that do not promote an anthropocentric bias. This is firstly achieved through the devising of a new theoretical approach to character analysis that is based on the recognition of perceptual aesthetic and sensual animal qualities in 'human-led', 'animal-led' and 'design-led' anthropomorphic characters, rather than a reliance on conceptual symbolic referencing of human experiences, goals, and narratives.

Moving into the practice and influence from historical animation work provides impetus for a move away from character and narrative based work. Experimental animation techniques are used to create rhythms and patterns of abstracted animal and human imagery. This new work is based on contemporary ecological ideas that discuss relationships between humans and animals as interconnected species, thus providing a second way of lessening of anthropocentric bias in the subject matter. Having a starting point of aesthetic and sensual responses to actual experiences with animals is an important factor and 'live action' film is re-animated to create digitally manipulated rhythms of colour, texture, movement and sound. The practical research outcomes are animation 'samples' that evidence the coming together of experimental digital techniques and contemporary ecological subject matter.

An action research model was devised for the research to enable the integration of theory and practice, and reflection on theory and practice to have an important influence on the practical outcomes. The approach taken was dependent on experience as a creative practitioner and as a teacher helping others to develop a sustainable creative practice, in allowing an open and intuitive discovery of ideas from both theoretical and practical explorations to create a flow through the research. The combination of theoretical and practical research undertaken provides an impetus towards the creation of future animation work using an anthropomorphic visual language redefined as 'zooanthropomorphic animation'.

The submission includes outcomes of a written thesis and a DVD showing practical animation work.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Research Questions and aims of the research.

This thesis addresses the main research question:

‘How might a redefining of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representation bring a new impetus to the use of animal imagery within contemporary animation practice?’

From this, three progressive questions emerged that directed the research:

1. What is ‘anthropomorphism’ and how is this term used across different fields of knowledge and cultural settings?
2. Is it possible to approach creative work using anthropomorphism in ways that do not promote a strongly anthropocentric bias?
3. How might anthropomorphic imagery within animation be used to respond to contemporary issues surrounding human/animal interactions?

1.2 Background and emerging questions

Q. What is anthropomorphism and how is the term used across different fields of knowledge and cultural setting?

Working as a freelance model maker in the animation industry¹ I was often working on anthropomorphic animal characters with little apparent questioning within the process as to why and how this form of animal imagery had evolved or was developing to serve popular animation films and TV series. In my own creative practice making hybrid figures I was combining the animal and human elements in a variety of ways and using this visual imagery in a symbolic way to express a range of personal, social and political themes. These experiences of practical work made me realize that anthropomorphism was used as a descriptive word for a ‘melting pot’ of diverse ideas and intentions, with no clear understanding of how to reference the range of design possibilities. The first part of the research was to identify a cross disciplinary theoretical framework to

¹ I worked for Aardman Animation, Bristol, on freelance contracts between 1997 and 2010, for Aaargh Animations, Cardiff, 1997-2000. This work is discussed as part of Chapter 2

understand anthropomorphism in a wider context so that I could answer the initial aspects of my research question; namely, what is anthropomorphism and how is this term used across different fields of knowledge and cultural settings?

'Anthropomorphism: the attribution of human characteristics to a god, animal or object.

Zoomorphism: the attribution of animal form to a god, human or object.' (O.E.D)

From these two definitions we can understand a range of imagery that uses combinations of animal and human characteristics; hybrid creatures containing both animal and human references. This type of character has been present in some form throughout the history of mankind and in most cultures – from cave paintings; through different religious forms (e.g. shamanism; Egyptian gods; deities of Hinduism); in myths and cultural folk tales; in a wealth of adult and children's literature and political and social satire. Each new technological advance (the type and range of materials and techniques), has also brought forth a development of hybrid creations; from drawings made in mud and charcoal; through etched and printed book illustrations; to present day digital and moving image film-work.

Animal characters have played an integral part in the history of animation, through ongoing changes in technique (from simple drawn lines through to present day special effects), and development of narratives (from two-minute gags to full-length feature films). Usually, the characters are not truly animal in form or nature, but are hybrids of humans and animals: anthropomorphic or zoomorphic creatures. Within popular forms of animation, animal characters are seen within a narrative context, evidencing mankind's cultural and psychological development through a dominant form of communicating ideas through storytelling (Boyd, 2009). Within this type of 'storytelling' animals are used as ready vehicles to represent ideas about human experience, and anthropomorphism is a way of supplying layers of symbolic ideas, as well as a means of creating lovable and entertaining characters. This was the kind of anthropomorphic visual language that I recognized in the characters that I was creating, both in a personal context and for the animation industry. While these characters were popular, I felt unease in continuing to make this work that I

could not readily explain and this was a key prompt to undertaking the research of this PhD. It was through an investigation of approaches and responses to anthropomorphism seen in other disciplines that I was able to understand the wider context of the creative work I was making.

Philosophical ideas relating to animals dating back to Aristotle tended to set up a divide between human and non-human animals and create hierarchies of competency with humans always at the top. This is further accented by western Christian religions – giving dominion over animals and making humans in the likeness of god. Whilst in Eastern religions we find slightly less elevation of the human in that humans have a more custodial role, the state of being animal is still seen to be a lesser or lower state than that of being human (Fudge, 2002). In many of the sciences, such as the biological sciences, social anthropology and social geography, human interpretations that use anthropomorphic description were felt to be lacking in rigour and detrimental to the reality of animals' lives (Kennedy, 1992; Wynne, 2007a).

From both philosophy and science, then, we can see ambivalence towards the use of anthropomorphism that linked humans and other animals together. While, historically, this was because humans were felt to be debased by too close a connection to animal nature, more recent concerns to bring animal welfare to prominence have transformed this, so that it is now felt that it is degrading to animals to use them to portray characters that are funny, evil or highly stereotyped. Further complications arise with representations of animals including anthropomorphic characters used to subvert notions of authenticity in advertising and promotional media (Potter, 2010).

In the last 30 years people with an interest in academic work about animals have come together under new disciplines of 'Animal studies', 'Human/Animal Studies' and 'Critical Animal Studies'. In recent published writing, papers for conferences and exhibitions there has been a notable distaste for the use of symbolic forms of animal imagery, including anthropomorphism which is felt to be 'reductionist', in that any thoughts for the animals are obliterated by an

overbearing anthropocentrism (Burt, 2002; Baker, 2001; Berger, 1980). The following example from 'Antennae', 'the Journal of Nature in Visual Culture' is an example of the very articulate and forceful message that has been put forward:

Watt notes:

....animals are so often marginalised in recent contemporary art, even when they appear at first to be the primary subject. Accordingly, the respectful representation of the animal as an individual and the avoidance of using the animal as symbol or signifier is a matter of great importance to be heeded by artists and curators, lest the animals be exploited as beasts of burden forced to carry inappropriate conceptual agendas, allowing for a range of problematic and unethical uses and representations in animal artworks (Watt, 2011).

It is personal experience of similar negative response to my own creative work, especially in relation to how I was referencing animals, that led me to look for ways in which I could gain and promote more of an understanding for anthropomorphic and zoomorphic imagery. I sought to identify if I was making the same assumptions or investments when representing animals in my own practice and this raised the second important line of questioning in the research, to consider whether it was possible to find a non-anthropocentric way of using and defining anthropomorphism as a visual language in creative work, placing more importance on the animal element rather than taking human experience and a human narrative to be the focus of content.

Q. Is it possible to approach creative work using anthropomorphism in ways that do not promote a strongly anthropocentric bias?

Arguably, when employed as elements in creative work, animals will always carry meanings beyond their own immediate presence, indicating the multiplicity of cultural interpretations from which any audience can draw to complement their understanding and response to the work. It is hoped that by extending the parameters of what has become a normal mode of analyzing animal representation in animation, that of discussing the animal character in

terms of their ability as 'replacement humans' and signifiers of 'the human condition', I can instead direct audiences to new perspectives highlighting the contribution coming from animal elements within the make-up of imaginative anthropomorphic relationships shown in animated characters. From my experience as a practitioner, working with perceptual responses to animals, i.e. sensual interest and delight in their forms and movements, was a natural step that gave a different point of view than depending on conceptual and symbolic referencing to create meaning in human based narratives. This approach led me to the development of a new theoretical paradigm in my work, through which animation character designs are examined using aesthetic qualities as the key to formulating a descriptive framework of 'human-led', 'animal-led' and 'design-led' categories. It is possible to use this perspective, both to analyze existing animation work and as a tool to aid the designing of new characters.

Q. How might anthropomorphic imagery within animation be used to respond to contemporary issues surrounding human/animal interactions?

The combined impact of the research that explored anthropomorphism in animation and the research that investigated the use of animation in a wider context, brought me to a third line of questioning responding to contemporary issues surrounding relationships between humans and animals. In this I wished to help move animation away from being an easy and entertaining point of correspondence between children and animals, to a more progressive and insightful communication tool working with aesthetic and sensual responses rather than storytelling and characterization. It has been important to critically engage with practitioners and researchers outside of the field of animation, in order to gain a broader understanding of relevant discourse surrounding ecological issues, and to find a platform where my research can become part of the developing interest in these contemporary themes. This took the research into areas of Environmental and Green Studies, including a review of the Deep Ecology Movement, Environmental Aesthetics and work of modern philosophers who have particularly developed ideas for the interconnectedness of living creatures.

One of the main developments in the research then was to see importance in using actual lived experience with animals, with 'experiential engagement' becoming inspiration for new animation work. In this third stage of research, the practical work moved away from using *characters* within narrative animation film, towards anthropomorphism now being used to describe the entirety or gestalt of the animation film. For me, this felt a more natural way of responding to the sensual and aesthetic experiences which relationships with animals provided. The initial main question of my research that had been: 'How might anthropomorphic and zoomorphic characterization find an authentic representation in contemporary animation practice?' then became, 'How might a redefining of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representation bring a new impetus to the use of animal imagery within contemporary animation practice?' This shift made it possible for me to further my practice through experimental animation techniques using abstracted imagery to explore emotional responses to human/animal interactions, rather than continuing to work with traditionally dominant forms of 'hyper-realist' character based animation (Thomas and Johnston, 1981). And, for this new form of anthropomorphic representation I have used the more inclusive descriptive word 'zooanthropomorphism', which recognizes the input of both animal and human elements.

A starting point of gathering source material through live-action footage proved to be a key factor in formulating new working practices that would evidence the re-theorization of animation as 'zooanthropomorphic' animation with digital 're-animating' of live action film becoming the chosen technique for explorations of a re-framed moving imagery including animal, human and environmental visual content. From this perspective, anthropomorphism was no longer defined as an embedded, symbolic representation, but as a connected 'felt' experience and point of sensual engagement, with representative forms in the image used to 'animate' phenomenological *responses* - the pleasure, curiosity and sense of wonder (Hepburn, 2009) brought about by shared experiences between living entities.

1.3 Key theoretical texts and the research context.

Davis (2002) identifies 'the capacity to survey, synthesize and evaluate the literature' as a way of differentiating between professional and research work, being, 'an essential prelude to a clear identification of the niche which the research is designed to fill.' I have evidenced my review of previous literature at relevant points throughout the thesis rather than as a dedicated chapter, because this produced a more integrated form of information and reflection, which is in line with the research methodology. The following is a summary of key texts that were helpful in understanding the context of the developing research.

For the initial work on defining descriptions and uses of anthropomorphism the work of Winnicott (1971) and Case (2005) were particularly useful for understanding psychological aspects relating to anthropomorphic imagery. *Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism* (Daston and Mitman (eds), 2005); *Animals in Person: Cultural Perspectives on Human-Animal Intimacies* (Knight (ed), 2005), and *Anthropomorphism, Anecdotes and Animals* (Mitchell, Thomas and Miles (eds) 1997), provided useful chapters in examining social attitudes to the use of anthropomorphism to describe both animal and human experiences. Boyd's writing on storytelling (2009, *On the Origin of Stories, Evolution, Cognition and Fiction*) and Langer's *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art* (1969) enabled me to gain an understanding for how visual languages have developed within cultural texts.

Links with 'Animal Studies' have provided discourse about anthropomorphism exploring cultural attitudes to animals and representations of animals including that of anthropomorphic imagery. John Berger was an early exponent with his 1980 essay, *Why Look at Animals?* The work of Steve Baker (particularly *The Post-modern Animal, 2000* and *Picturing the Beast: Animal Identity and Representation, 2001*), Giovanni Aloï (*Art and Animals, 2012*), John Burt (*Animals in Film, 2002*), Erica Fudge (*Animal, 2002*), Susan McHugh (*Animal Stories, 2011*), Anat Pick (*Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film, 2011*) and A.M.Lippit (*Electric Animal, Towards a Rhetoric of Wildlife, 2000*), have all helped to progress a discourse of contemporary post-modern and post-humanist ideas about representation of animals. Books by Weil (*Thinking*

Animals: Why Animal Studies Now? 2012) and DeMello (*Animals in Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies*, 2012) enabled me to frame philosophical ideas about animal and human relations under the headings of 'the Animal Other' and 'the Animal Gaze'.

Within the field of Animation Studies, Paul Wells is the most prominent author linking animals and animation with his seminal book *The Animated Bestiary*, (2009), including some analysis of anthropomorphic characterization. Further texts by Wells that were helpful to this research include: *Animation, Genre and Authorship* (2002), *Animation and America* (2002) and chapters in *Animal Life and the Moving Image* (Lawrence and McMahon (eds), 2015) and *Lives Beyond Us: Poems and Essays on the Film Realities of Animals* (Manley and Irving (eds), 2015). Wells has written a large body of work relating to the representation of animals in animation and using animals as a visual language in different forms of animation, particularly using concepts of 'bestial ambivalence' and 'the three models of animality: *continuity, communion and complementariness*'. In my research I found these pertinent ideas to be a stepping point from which I was able to develop a personal approach to the analysis of anthropomorphic imagery based on my practical and creative experience using aesthetic and sensual response.

Three important texts that discuss the use of animal imagery in animation in relation to environmental or ecological themes are *The Idea of Nature in Disney Animation* (Whitley, 2008), *Enviro-toons: Green Themes in Animated Cinema and Television* (Pike, 2012) and *That's All Folks: Ecocritical Readings of American Animated Features* (Murray and Heumann, 2011). While all of these works include some analysis of animal characters, their concerns are not specific to anthropomorphism or indeed to animal representations, with the body of their arguments discussing how environmental issues have been represented in popular animated feature films. Contemporary scholars writing articles that link animation and anthropomorphism include Collignon (2008) who focuses on comparisons between animation and graphic cartoon illustrations; Powers (2012), who uses theories of the 'ludic' to compare animation with live action films and Gunning (1986) who relates early forms of animation to a 'cinema of

attraction'. My research makes a connection with all of these texts about animation, but defines a more specific relationship between anthropomorphism, experimental animation and ecological content.

A review of the history of animation, made in order to find where animal representations are referenced, was undertaken using works by Donald Crafton (*Before Mickey: The Animated film 1898-1928*, 1993), Norman Klein (*7 Minutes, The Life and Death of the American Animated Cartoon*, 1993) and Karen Beckman(ed) (*Animating Film Theory*, 2014). The writing of Gehman and Reinke (*The Sharpest Point, Animation at the End of Cinema*, 2005), Lev Manovich (*The Language of New Media*, 1995) and Sean Cubitt (*Ecomedia*, 2005 and *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*, with Rust and Monani, 2013) have highlighted relationships between digital film making practices and early forms of animation. From these references I have been able to formulate my own framework for analyzing animal characters and found an important inspiration for experimental animation forms of anthropomorphism in early animated movements, that work with a vitality and aliveness outside conventions of naturalistic reality.

Finally, the need to understand modern philosophical ideas relating to ecology of an interconnected planet brought me to the Deep Ecology Movement (work of Arne Naess, David Abram, Val Plumwood) and particular individual voices such as Tim Ingold (relating to 'networks' and 'meshes'), Donna Haraway (relating to 'engagement' and 'entanglements', and Deleuze and Guattari (relating to 'rhizome's and the concept of 'becoming'). The work of Berleant, Carlson and others involved in the discourse of Environmental Aesthetics has been of particular importance for my research in framing a contemporary content for new animation work which builds on sensual engagement and everyday shared experiences with animals. The work of Laura Marks (*The Skin of the Film*, 2000 and *Touch*, 2002) and Lucy Donaldson (*Texture in Film*, 2014) related aspects of sensual and embodied engagement to experimental forms of film practice that also helped to frame the experimental animation work undertaken for this research project.

1.4 Methodology

Borgdorff (2006) reports the AHRC's four criteria for establishing research are: 1) research questions or problems are addressed, 2) a context for the research is explained, 3) one or more research methods are addressed and 4) the results of the research study will be appropriately documented and disseminated.

Gray (1996) documents the emergence of 'practice based' research projects within academia through the 1970s and 80s, which were given encouragement by the UK Council for National Academic Awards who legitimized 'reflection on practice' and the inclusion of 'elements of practice' (artworks and artefacts) in part submission for higher degrees. Practice-based and practice-led research were recognized as 'research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners' (Gray, 1996) and research where the design 'incorporates both experimentation and participation in practice and the interpretation of that practice' (Borgdorff, 2006). The following elements have played a part in this research project: an auto-ethnographic account providing reflection on my past practice through which the main and a secondary research question emerged; experimentation through creative practice with an auto-ethnographic account reflecting on the new ideas and ways of working; the recording of new practice in the evidence of animation samples through which the questions are addressed and ideas can be disseminated. Alongside and interweaving with the practice, I have written a reflective and informative thesis that documents the journey of research, presenting a research context and the outcomes of new knowledge. I therefore put forward that this PhD research has addressed the above criteria and is employing a 'practice based' methodology.

The practice based nature of research in the arts, has meant that 'action research' has become an often-used model for underpinning the methodology. Kurt Lewin first used the title 'action research' in 1944 to describe a process using 'a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action' (Lewin, 1946 in Candy, 2011). In 1975 Kolb developed the cyclical nature of action research to include four

elements of concrete experience, reflective observation, the forming of abstract concepts and testing in new situations (Smith, 2001). This is shown in Fig 1.

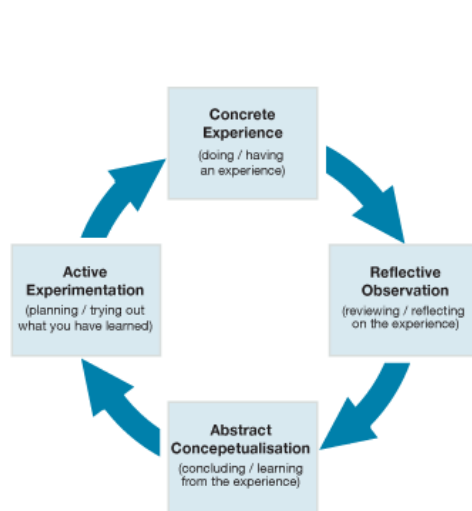


Fig 1. Kolb's Action Research Model, 1975

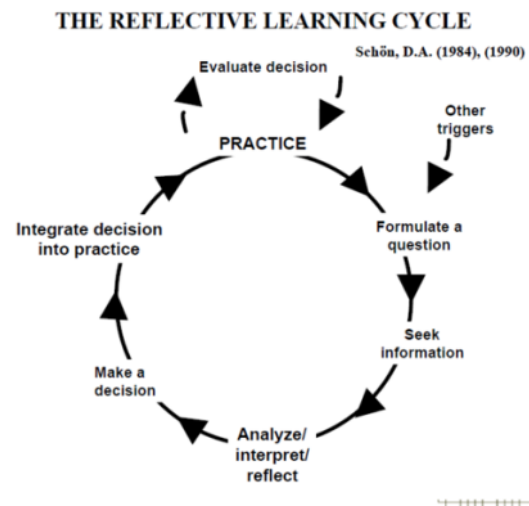


Fig 2. Schon's Reflective Learning Cycle, 1984

More recent models have re-defined the cyclical elements, for example as 'plan, act, observe, reflect', but the main elements always included are action and reflection leading to enhanced modes of practice (Coats, 2005). Krogh believes that action research is a natural learning process for most people because '(I)it recognises that people learn through the active adaptation of their existing knowledge in response to their experiences with other people and their environment (Krogh, 2001).

Kolb described 'experiential learning' as the process of learning undertaken through 'action research', and Donald Schon (1983) also used the term 'experiential learning' in relation to 'the reflective practitioner', which had a great influence on the acceptance of practice based methodologies for research in the arts (Candy, 2011). Schon introduced the term 'reflection-in-action', basing his ideas on the work of Dewey (1933) (see Fig 2), and taking the starting point for reflective practice to be the lived experience of the practitioner. His model of research includes 'the tacit understandings of practitioners' being used to produce 'well founded insights', rather than always using theoretical knowledge from outside sources (Candy 2011).

Criticisms of 'action research' and 'experiential learning' cyclical models include: that 'intuition' as a mode of learning is not accounted for (Webb 1980); 'the idea of stages or steps does not sit well with the reality of thinking' (Smith, 2001), and that strictures of a problem solving and solution finding model risks 'damaging both the artists' practice as artists and the culture to which their works and understandings contribute (Scrivener, 2002). For my own model of practice-based methodology I wish to use 'action research' and 'experiential learning' as points of reference, but seek to develop an individual interpretation of cyclical reflective practice that resolves these criticisms.

Candy documents the work of individual artist/researchers who discovered that 'a key feature of arts based research was 'the almost universal need to create an individual framework that could be used to structure reflections and actions' (Candy 2011). In formulating a successful personal research framework for this project, my understanding is that this will be a model for future research in my own practice and hopefully also useful to other researchers. From the beginning of the study, I wanted a research framework that left the process of formulating questions and determining answers open and ongoing throughout the course of the work. This may seem haphazard or unpredictable, but the journey through the research is then able to form relationships, take on learning and produce outcomes that it is not possible to predict at the outset. Borgdorff describes this kind of process:

(N)ot only do academic researchers often develop the appropriate research methods and techniques as they go, but the rules for the validity and reliability of the research results also do not derive from some standard that is external to, and hence independent of, the research; they are defined within the research domain itself' (Borgdorff, 2006).

Candy also suggests that because artistic making processes are often inherently experimental and 'driven by personal frameworks that are continually being renewed', practice based research may include a departure from traditional forms of research where questions and outcomes are established in advance (Candy, 2011). For me, this meant that I understood in broad terms the area I

wished to research - that of anthropomorphism in animation - but the journey of the research was to be a step-by-step process: gathering information through exploration of theory and practice. Reflecting and responding were tools to be used throughout the process of research.

A second important element of the research was to question and test how the theory and practice were to be integrated. Borgdorff proposes that there is no high degree of separation between theory and practice in arts research:

After all, there are no art practices that are not saturated with experiences, histories and beliefs; and conversely there is no theoretical access to, or interpretation of, art practice that does not partially shape that practice into what it is (Borgdorff, 2006).

But, in recent years there has been an emphasis on the importance of the practice embodying knowledge in its own right, this as a way of counteracting the dominance coming from theoretical disciplines in which higher-level degrees have more historical precedence. Learning arising through tacit practical 'know-how' and the particular specialist knowledge of the practitioner has been highlighted. In practice-based research, the practitioner is relating to their own research both subjectively and objectively, they are both practitioner and theorist for their own and others' creative work. There is an obvious need for the context of the research to be addressed theoretically, but my belief was and is that the gaining of theoretical information and subsequent processes of reflection and response, could be integrated with the practical research more fundamentally and intuitively. In this I return to the work of Dewey who did not see 'experiential learning', as dualistic research - theory separated from practice, or reflection separated from action - as more recent educationalists have done (Dewey, 1933).

The model of an integrated form of reflective research practice that emerged for me is illustrated in Fig 3. In this I have expanded on the research process that I would make use of when developing any new work in my own creative practice;

indeed the process that I would also use when working with students to show them a sustainable model of developing creative ideas.

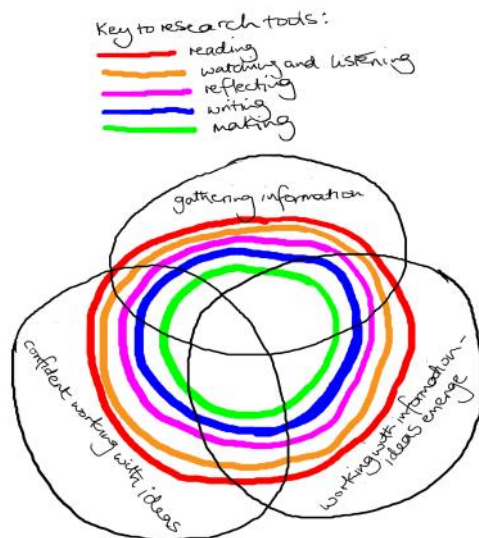


Fig 3. Sketch of Integrated Research Cycle.

The stages of process seen in other learning cycles are here re-defined as learning tools that can be used as and when is appropriate. Broader stages of a research journey are identified as times of gathering information, times of working or experimenting with information allowing ideas to emerge and times of confident working with ideas. In all of these stages I am describing both theoretical and practical ways of working, i.e. gathering information can be done through both reading and writing and working practically with artistic/animation processes; ideas can emerge through reading and writing and working with artistic /animation processes; and confident ideas can be worked into outcomes both in written work and in animation work. Reflection-in-practice' and 'reflection-on-practice' (after Schon) can be further developed to include 'reflection-on- theory- in-practice, acknowledging that while making practical work, theoretical input that has been digested will be part of the influence on decisions made during the processes of working. All of this, then, describes a progressive step for action research as an integration of theory and practice when discussing practice based research work.

1.5 Contribution to knowledge

The examination of anthropomorphism in animation undertaken in this research project is a contribution to the field of Animation Studies. Part of this has been to devise a new theoretical paradigm that matched my personal working experience in the evolution of the PhD and is based on aesthetic and sensual perceptual responses to animal elements rather than conceptual symbolic referencing of human experiences. It provides a way of discussing anthropomorphism and animal characters that builds connections to other contemporary disciplines such as 'Animal Studies' and 'Ecology' because the starting point and focus is from the animal element in the hybrid partnership rather than the more usual dominance of human context. Animation is then, by its audio-visual aliveness, a useful tool for disseminating ideas and engaging a wider audience with these issues. The framework of 'human-led', 'animal-led' and 'design-led' analysis may also be useful to character designers and animators when creating new anthropomorphic characters, and to provide a structure for teaching character design.

The thesis and practical samples of animation work document a practice moving from character and narrative based animation work to more experimental animation techniques and aesthetics. This provides an insight into how creative development proceeds through exploration, problem solving and decision-making, and how input from both theory and practice makes this change possible. It also provides a reflection on differences between industry production and independent work in animation. Choosing to concentrate the practice on experimental 'samples' provided a research method that maximized the experimental nature of working with new ideas. The process of animation is time consuming and this approach meant a variety of ideas could be worked through, rather than labouring under the limitations that a finished film would have meant.

The version of an action research model used as methodology was devised to evidence a creative approach that integrates theory and practice. This is based on my experience both as a creative practitioner, and as a lecturer on a wide range of courses where the teaching of a sustainable method for developing

creative ideas has been necessary. By identifying different forms of research, including reading, reflecting and making, as tools to be used whenever appropriate, rather than structured stages of research, the research process has become more open and responsive throughout all stages. This enabled me, by the end of the project, to be working with theory elements in exactly the same way as practice elements, seeing both writing and animating as creative processes. It is possible that this will be helpful to future researchers undertaking practice based PhDs.

1.6 Limitations of the research

The topic of anthropomorphism in animation opens possibilities to a huge area of research, including work relating to animals, work relating to robotics, work relating to special effects and many more areas. Connections to a wider frame of reference crossing into disciplines outside animation are also indicated. It has, therefore, been continually necessary to define and revise areas of concern in order to frame a body of work that was possible to complete as a PHD project of research. I have been guided by developments in my practice, my former knowledge and experiences within animation and particularly my interests relating to a wider context for the work to decide where limitations would be placed.

I have defined anthropomorphism for the purposes of this research project as that which relates to animal/human hybrid forms, which is why the use of anthropomorphism/zoomorphism was indicated in the main question raised by the research. Other forms of anthropomorphism that relate to an analysis of human movement in robotics, or that follows how humans recognise aspects of themselves in inanimate objects are not an area for this research. Equally, I have not made a particular review of the way in which CGI special effects work is able to create hybrid and morphing anthropomorphic characters, because this research would not have been served well to go into the relatively more technical aspects associated with this sort of work. There are several topical discourses relating to my use of live action film as source material for animated

manipulation, such as the framing of reality and hyper-reality when using anthropomorphic characters, and the use of anthropomorphism in wildlife film making. Again, because of the limitations of time and wordage, I have chosen not to pursue these areas of research within this body of work.

I have given an overview of animation history, where it is relevant to building my own framework for analyzing anthropomorphic animation character. This then is not an extensive historical record but rather a plotting of important elements of character development.

In seeking a wider frame of reference for understanding attitudes to anthropomorphism I have touched on writing from human and animal sciences and made connections to 'Animal Studies' disciplines. In all of these areas there were avenues where I could have undertaken a greater depth of research, for example thinking about animation and activism for the welfare of animals, thinking about links between animation and illustration in terms of social and political cartooning, or making further study of children's relationships to animated characters. Equally, at each stage of research development there were opportunities to settle into a mode of practice for the duration of the research. For example I could have worked with my aesthetic framework for character design and experimented with more extremes of taxonomy, or I could have made animation work to raise the profile of a particular issue for animal rights or ecological activism. These are areas of development, then, that could be picked up at a later date, but for me there was a very clear drive to push on, and move into an area of practice that brought a unity in a personal philosophy and ways of creating. This has come through linking aspects of environmental aesthetics and experimental animation aesthetics. The aim of the practice, then, has not been to make finished animation film work, but to experiment with modes of working, formulations of audio-visual content and ways of developing an anthropomorphic language. This has provided a range of animated samples, which will be useful in the future development of more finished film work, but at this time have an importance in evidencing the process of research.

1.7 Organization of chapters.

Chapter 2 provides a reflection on my experience of anthropomorphism before undertaking this research. This is an auto-ethnographic account of both my personal creative work as a sculptor making figurative, hybrid characters, and my work as a model-maker in the animation industry. This is where the main research question is raised and the first section of research, that of defining the term anthropomorphism, is determined.

Chapter 3 explores approaches to anthropomorphism, finding a context in animal and human sciences, and philosophy of attitudes to animals and the representation of animals. This theoretical study not only uncovers how anthropomorphism is often related to negative aspects of anthropocentrism, but also provides ideas for contemporary subject matter for animation work using animals, particularly focusing on ecology and the interrelation of species. In this way the last two research questions are identified and discussed so that ideas are brought forward for use in the new creative work.

In Chapter 4 a history of the development of animation characters is analyzed through a new theoretical paradigm based on the aesthetic response to anthropomorphic design elements. This provides 'human-led'; 'animal-led', and 'design-led' categories with a discussion of relevant examples for each.

Undertaking the research for this chapter was essential to my understanding of how anthropomorphism has been used in animation most readily to illustrate human centred narratives, and that this new way of examining animation work provided a less anthropocentric direction of thought. From this, I was then able to see that an answer to the main research question would be provided through the practice by a move away from popular forms of character and narrative based animation, to more experimental and abstract working practices.

Chapter 5 begins with a review of the research journey, indicating the important elements of both theoretical and practical reflection (discussed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4) that influenced and instigated the new practical work. This is followed by an auto-ethnographic account of the movement from an animation practice that is based in anthropomorphic character and narrative to the new digital and

experimental animation processes. This chapter documents the making of the new practical work through which all the research questions are resolved, so that anthropomorphic representations are re-defined through 'zooanthropomorphic' experimental animation using abstracted figural imagery that are created as a response to contemporary ecological issues.

Chapter 6. Concludes the journey of the research, reflecting on the process of research, the new knowledge gained and methods used to disseminate research findings. Implications for future research and ways in which the research may be used are also discussed.

2 Beginnings: Reflecting on practice - character animation

2.1 Introduction

In this beginning chapter I will be reflecting on the figurative sculptural work I made as part of a personal ceramic practice (1995 – 2005) and the model-making work I undertook as freelance work in the animation industry (1997-2010). I have chosen to document this as an auto-ethnographic account, because it is possible in this way to see how the desire to research the chosen topic surrounding anthropomorphism in animation developed from experiences of creative practice and how the particular lines of research questioning were indicated. This will include: comparisons between the working practice of an individual artist/designer and the workflows of a variety of model-making workshop pipelines; analysis of the types of anthropomorphic characters produced and the uses for these characters. A picture will emerge from this of ways in which anthropomorphism is used in the design of animation characters and narrative, and problems arising when there is a lack of understanding of anthropomorphism as a visual language.

2.2 Personal creative practice.

The beginnings of the anthropomorphic animal work in my own creative practice came about during my MA studies (1994-5) in which I was creating ceramic figurative sculptures. My interest in working with animals as source material for creative work led me initially to spend concentrated time undertaking a wide range of visual research to understand aspects of form and detailing, and to analyze structure and movement (making drawings; taking photos; collecting printouts); working through several series of animals, birds and insects (frogs, monkeys, pigs, cockerels etc). This included making notes of live animals at zoos, farms and in domestic settings; watching wildlife videos and TV programmes; going to museums to study taxidermied animals and skeletons. From this I found particular details that stood out to me as representative for each animal and built a personal image library that I could become familiar and

confident with using. Whilst I also went to life drawing classes at various times to work on my understanding of the human form, I was more interested in working with and understanding animal elements. I felt that in building such an encompassing knowledge of each animal I was bringing authenticity to the work - it was important to have this grounding of knowledge to make choices from, even though my reaction to the visual input was to create personally stylized and imagined creatures. I investigated ways to create structures, textures, surfaces and patterns - searching out things that fascinated me and creating visual connections that resonated for me. This was a first stage of using a visual language of anthropomorphism, creating hybrid animal/human forms purely from aesthetic delight and imaginative curiosity (Fig 4).

The academic structure necessary for MA study led me to look outside the situated making of the work to gain a broader contextual understanding of representations of animals, particularly hybrid imaginative creatures. I began making notes of stories and information for each animal that I studied coming from a range of sources such as anecdotes, scientific evidences, folk tales, present day news items. I enjoyed instilling some humour into what could be seen as pointedly critical commentary and working with elements of caricature, pantomime and satire. In addition, theoretical study of 18th and 19th C book illustration and political cartooning using animal/anthropomorphic imagery further developed my understanding of universal and cultural symbolic references encountered through animal representations.

The interrelation of practical and theoretical investigations thus provided layers of information and interest that could be incorporated into my figurative work, helping me to formulate ways of representing political and social issues I wished to raise. This was a second stage of anthropomorphic interpretation in my work. The anthropomorphism created a symbolic language that allowed viewers to respond to the work on different levels, from purely finding the hybrid animal figures fascinating or amusing, to understanding a more hard-edged comment on modern life. Certainly, from feedback at exhibitions and selling situations, I found a wide-ranging audience who recognised and understood the layered nature of an anthropomorphic visual language (Fig 5).



Fig 4. The earliest forms of using anthroporphism in my creative work. Gill Bliss 1995.



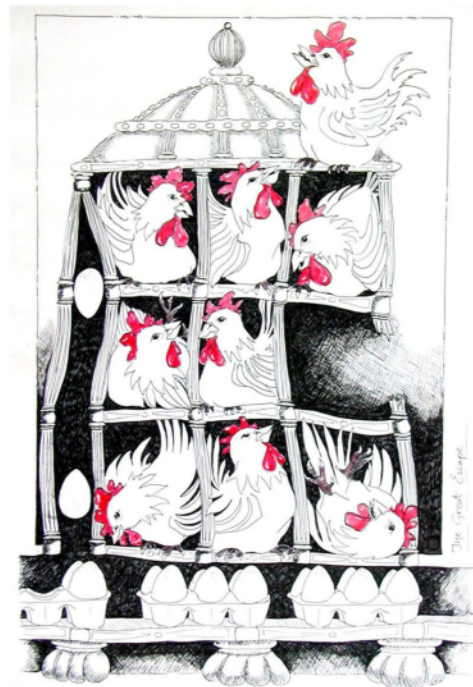
'We Regret to Inform You....'



'First Prize'



'Harpie'



'The Great Escape'

Fig 5. Using anthropomorphic animals to represent human social and political themes.

Gill Bliss 1995 - 2010

Having made a collection of related ideas, I would work out through exploratory drawings what I wanted to say in each piece, so that I had a committed idea in my head by the time I started any sculpting in clay. However, there was an essential openness in the working practice, with a continual flow of experiments of texturing, colouring, building and finishing techniques. In this way of working it is essential not only to have the confidence in one's skills with materials and techniques to allow things to develop in the practice, but also to use one's experience of reflecting on the suitability and quality of what actually emerges in process, to make on-going judgements and adjustments. The process of working in clay affected design elements, for example, the need for forms to be hollow to allow for firing but also structurally strong enough to support themselves. This might dictate things like the size of feet, the pose of a figure or the surrounding objects. The material and process, then, could be seen as a factor that might limit or create design elements - the process of making dictated certain parameters for the work that, once experienced, would be incorporated into future design thinking.

Could I say that these hybrid figures were animal, or human? Perhaps a human personality inside with an animal form outside? Certainly a flavour of personality seemed to emerge as if the characters were finding their identity through the coming together of the material and process. For example, to me certain animals were always of a set gender e.g. frogs were all male; birds were all women (apart from the obvious male cockerels). The figures were worked to incorporate different levels of human content e. g. wearing clothes, attributes, gestural pose, but I did not have a set standard or outline onto which every animal had to be moulded - there seemed to be strong suggestions inherent in each animal form that led the way to how much clothing and what sort of pose it was possible to use. I felt that a high level of skilful modelling and knowledgeable interpretation was necessary to bring validity to the work even though the characters were imagined and outside reality.

Although I understood a narrative behind each piece, the modelled form lived in a situation that each animal was suited to - I did not think of any being able to move outside the event they were caught in. The medium of ceramic sculpture

lent itself to this sort of individual illustration and the success of any piece was judged on its ability to communicate the relevant human experience through the symbolic references embodied in the figure and surrounding attributes. This, then, would have made them possible characters for one short plot-led animation film, rather than the subject of a character-based series with range of storylines. The language of anthropomorphism here allowed the focus of content to move away from being a portrait of an animal, a human or even a hybrid creature, to being the illustration of a social/political comment.

2.3 Industry work.

In 1997 I started working as a freelance model-maker; my skills and experience in detailed modelling and mould making within clay work made me a useful person in the stop-motion animation industry. In this situation, as the character designs were already formulated and fixed by directors and designers further up the pipeline, my role was to translate designs that worked as drawings on paper into fully functioning animation puppets. Here, I will discuss my work for Aardman Animations, and Aaargh Animations, as this will allow me to raise particular issues concerning the mix of anthropomorphic character tropes present in their modern day stop-motion projects.

Peter Lord and Dave Sproxton set up the Aardman Studios in 1972 and from the early days the company became associated with stop-motion film work including feature films, TV series, TV specials and adverts. The first project that I worked on was *Chicken Run* (between 1997 and 2000).

The making of animation puppets for feature films at Aardman such as *Chicken Run* (2000) and *Wallace and Gromit: the Curse of the Were-Rabbit* (2005), both of which have anthropomorphic animal characters, was dictated by the need to make exact repeats of every character so that sometimes as many as 12 animation workstations using the same character could be in action at any one time. Once a character maquette was modelled from design drawings in sculpting wax or grey plasticine, this was physically broken down into component parts, and each part moulded so that it could be reproduced many

times. Aardman has a reputation for plasticine animation (or clay animation), but in fact a range of materials are used for the feature film puppets so that they will stand up to the long term physical activity; including silicon and resin components built on metal ball-and-socket or wire armatures (Fig 6).



Fig 6. The puppets at Aardman Animations are constructed from a range of materials.

The working pipeline of materials and processes, very different to the individual nature of my personal creative work, had an effect on the sorts of designs that it was possible to work with. In practice, designs that could not be effectively translated into the 'multiple' process would be modified to make more efficient use of time and materials. If certain puppets were difficult to animate they may be returned to the model-making workshop to be adjusted and re-worked. In this way character features that had been influenced by the medium of stop-motion animation became standard for future design work, because they functioned successfully. This was true for elements that could be seen as anthropomorphic in nature such as the use of clothing and jewellery strategically placed to cover access and articulation points at the chickens' necks and wrists. Other elements became more simplified or exaggerated – such as the classic Nick Park styling of large brows (enabling the moulding of eye sockets and easy access for movable eyes) and large mouths (that were ideal for an animation process that used mouth replacements). It is possible to trace the gradual change in these features over many years and different projects to a point of ultimate efficiency for a stop motion animation process, much the same as can be seen in the development of the Mickey Mouse character for a 'cell' animation production pipeline at Disney.

So, in this working environment I very quickly became aware that influences on anthropomorphic character designs could include the process of manufacture, the materials used and the ultimate function; all contributing to 'fit-for-purpose' outcomes in ways that were not so obvious in my own one-off, sculptural and static figures. Also, it was interesting for me to be working on designs created by Nick Park and Peter Lord, containing completely different ideas about the specific human and animal elements it was possible to combine to produce a successful character. For example the chickens in *Chicken Run*, as in many other Aardman bird characters, have a set of teeth and their legs bend as human legs, which is not the same as bird legs do. Both of these features work better to create a sympathetic talking animal character with which the audience can empathize because the strangeness of taxonomy is reduced. Talking and walking animation movements are also more easily achieved (Fig 7).



Fig 7. Characters from *Chicken Run* (Park and Lord, 2000) showing human-like teeth and legs.

My feeling about the chicken characters in *Chicken Run* is that they are predominantly human - the main plot of escaping to find a better life; the subplot of a love story between the two main characters Rocky and Ginger, and the personality traits of main characters are all descriptive of human existence. The overlay of animal appearance is a device for adding humour. It could be said that the world of the chickens and the world of the humans was overlapping but not completely correspondent; although both the humans and chickens spoke in the same language, they did not appear to communicate through a common language. A similar schism can be identified when anthropomorphic personalities interact with animals such as pets or working animals that have no human traits but remain totally animal in structure and nature, for example seen in the guard dogs in *Chicken Run*. Here there is a three-way separation of character design in one narrative: the animal (guard dogs), the human (Mr and Mrs Tweedy) and the animal/human (chickens). In making the puppets of Gromit (*Wallace and Gromit and the Curse of the WereRabbit*, 2005), it was very obvious that there was a naturalistic type dog form ('all fours' positions) and a

more anthropomorphic hybrid form (human standing position), so that there were always questions in my mind as to which form was appropriate for which scenes. All of these examples show a mix in types of anthropomorphic language being present in one production or even one scene - these complications only surface when the text of the script and storyline is translated into the visual designs and animation process (Fig 8).



Fig 8. Different anthropomorphic versions of Gromit (from *Wallace and Gromit and the Curse of the Were-Rabbit*, Lord and Park, 2005)

The Aardman film *Wallace and Gromit and the Curse of the Were-Rabbit* (2005) and the Aargh TV special of *Tales of the World, Aunt Tiger- a Taiwanese Folk Tale* (2001) both have the main plotline of a human character changing into an animal: Wallace changes into a rabbit in the former (Fig 9) and the main Aunt character changes into a tiger in the latter (Fig 10).

Although the morphing technique is very well known and readily applied in digital work, the process of change raises particular problems in stop-motion animation, as a range of puppets must be created that work smoothly through the incremental changes. How far to go in the transformation of skeletal structure and how to stop the character looking as if it was just wearing an animal suit? How much of the human should remain as an indication of that person in the final animal design and what processes of change (e.g. splitting of skin, growing of hair, gradual enlarging of features) might be employed successfully?



Fig 9. The Were-rabbit's transformation, *Wallace and Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit* (Aardman Animations, 2005)



Fig 10. Aunt Tiger's transformation, *Aunt Tiger, A Taiwanese Folk Tale* (Aaargh Animations, 2000). Gill Bliss.

From my standpoint as a model-maker, this gave me a chance to think through the range of anthropomorphic types that each visual step might indicate – how much was the character human and how much animal at each stage. Slight changes in the hybrid form brought forward different possibilities for movement and for an overlay of consciousness and language. My personal interest at the time, although not my job on the film, was in thinking about the less obvious

forms of design that might transpire in such a morphing process and what this could mean for anthropomorphic content of future animation work.

Working on a range of anthropomorphic designs for *Creature Comforts*² I was made aware of additional nuances about the interplay between animal and human aspects of anthropomorphic characters. The making process for 'Creature Comforts' starts with a soundtrack of ordinary people answering questions about their lives. Animal characters and a scenario are created to match with but extend the meaning of the conversations, with humour added through accents, individual phrasing and personality quirks that the audience may recognize in their own lives. Over the years that this series has developed animals of different types have been shown including pets, working animals and farm animals; animals in a pet shop, on a beach, in a zoo – the anthropomorphism comes from the animal characters having human consciousness and language to reflect on their situations. Occasionally a subtly different type of anthropomorphic device has been included, with animals used in *human* scenarios, for example when seen as a family chatting in a domestic kitchen - the anthropomorphism here extends from the animal characters as talking animals, to the animal characters as stand-ins for humans (Fig 11). As far as I know this irregularity of character type was never overtly discussed – the strong focus of intent and influence has always been the humour coming from the script. Once again it is only when moving into the visual that these inconsistencies sometimes come to light.

Aardman Animations has many successful productions using the language of anthropomorphism to create amusement from human eccentricities and idiosyncrasies reflected in the lives of animal counterparts. In practice, strong characters and script can carry any problems that the mix of anthropomorphic language raises without creating a slippage in the perceived 'reality' of the filmic world.

² Creature Comforts was first created in 1989 with Nick Park's electricity advertisements and developed from 2003 as a TV series by Richard Golezowski. I worked on Series 2, 2005-6



The dog and cat are talking animals in an animal scenario, whereas the penguin family, with Andrew, are replacement humans.



Fig 11. Different types of anthropomorphic characters in *Creature Comforts* (Aardman Animations, 2003 to present.)

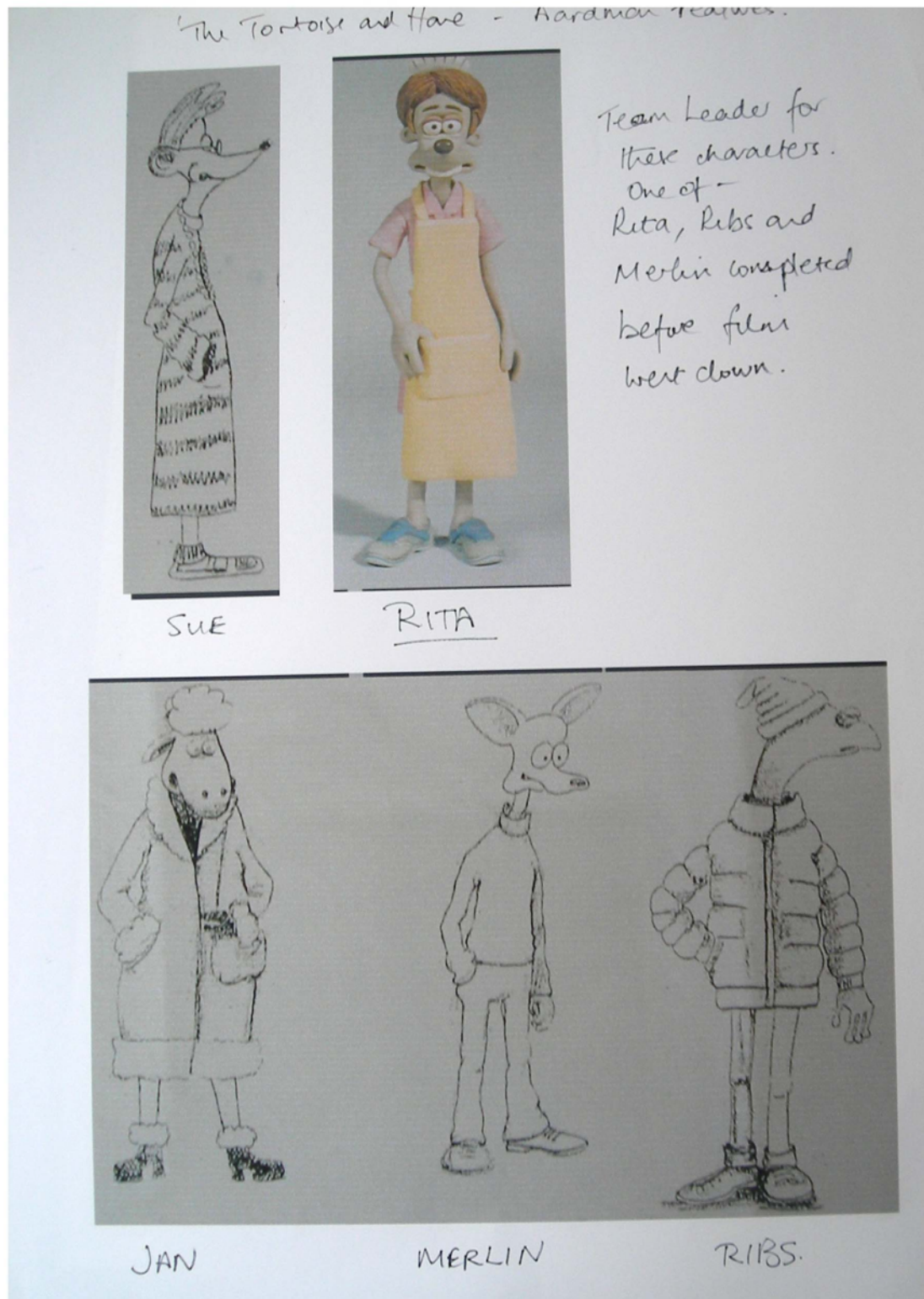


Fig 12. Notes from my personal record of characters for *The Tortoise and the Hare* (Aardman Animations), showing a range of characters based on one armature design. Gill Bliss, 2000

However, when working on *The Tortoise and the Hare* (the development of which followed on from *Chicken Run* in 2000), evidence of confusion over how anthropomorphism can impact on design became a major problem, causing weeks of extra work as characters were made and remade in a bid to resolve inconsistencies. The tortoise started out with no clothes, but as other characters were clothed his nakedness seemed unacceptable. An attempt was made to clothe him, but nothing would sit convincingly under a shell or over a shell. Designs of all secondary characters were created on a few generic forms, all standing fully clothed in human mode, with only the heads and possibly tails to show what animal was represented; this to make a much simplified mould-making and 'multiple' process of manufacture possible. These characters did not then seem to fit with the main characters that had more lively and individual modelling of form and detailing. In production, my team of model-makers was to make five characters from the same body-shape - two ferrets, a lizard, a sheep, and a chihuahua. The individual nature of the animal characters soon became lost and the constant question being asked was: 'what is that character supposed to be?' (Fig 12).

2.4 Conclusion

The following points sum up the contribution to the research given by this auto-ethnographic reflection on my own creative practice and work in industry and indicate the influence it had made in developing the new practice:

- In my own practice creating hybrid anthropomorphic figures, it was a sense of curiosity, delight and fascination for the textures, structures and details of animals that initially drew me to the animal subject matter. My responses that had been sensual and aesthetic at the outset were then given added meaning by including layers of symbolic referencing that addressed political and social issues particularly relating to human experiences. On examining this move away from response to *the animal* and towards a dominance of *human* elements of narrative and character, the research question concerning whether it was possible to make creative work 'without an anthropocentric

bias' was beginning to form. This work also gave me a lead into how re-examining my early practice could provide responsive ways of working that would be successfully translated into the future work.

- Reflecting on the design of the figures I made both in personal work and in the animation industry, I realized that materials and processes used had an effect on character design. This led on to thinking about animation processes from the viewpoint of promoting the animal nature and animal essence part of anthropomorphic characters, and how this might become an important part of the work. I had also begun considering how anthropomorphic imagery within animation might be used 'to respond to contemporary issues surrounding human/animal interactions?'
- Working in industry, I found a confusion of ideas surrounding anthropomorphic figures, with a range of styles combining animal and human forms and no clear understanding of when differences might be appropriate. In my own practical work I was unclear how to articulate the responses I had to the combining of animal and human elements. This is where an examination of 'anthropomorphism' and how the term is used 'across different fields of knowledge and cultural settings' became a necessary part of this research.

3 Examining Anthropomorphism in a Wider Context

3.1 Introduction

I began using anthropomorphism as part of a creative design process quite intuitively but soon realised that the range of possibilities that this visual language created had become a melting pot of confused ideas. I therefore felt that in order to critically engage effectively with character design and analysis of animation containing animal characters, it was necessary to understand a wider cross disciplinary discourse, and from this gain some clarity about the subtle variations of responses that anthropomorphism arouses. The following section gives an overview of my theoretical exploration of the word anthropomorphism and the concept of anthropomorphic thinking through different historical and cultural contexts including notions coming from scientific, and philosophical backgrounds. The research in this section has allowed me to understand why and how anthropomorphism manifests in a range of forms, to identify pre-conceived ideas that may have influenced creative development of anthropomorphism, and to uncover degrees of criticism that may influence an audiences' perception of anthropomorphic designs. This, then brings a full answer to the research question, 'what is anthropomorphism and how is this term used across different fields of knowledge and cultural settings?' The understanding that the use of anthropomorphism is often negatively linked to the idea of anthropocentrism is also uncovered; i.e. that in the most popular forms of animation the human elements of character and narrative dominate to an extent that any animal content becomes degraded or even rendered invisible. This gives links to further research questions that seek to find a resolution to 'anthropocentric bias' and move into creative animation work that responds to 'contemporary issues surrounding human/animal interactions?', thus providing impetus for ideas of the new practice to gestate.

The OED defines anthropomorphism as follows: 'the attribution of human characteristics or behavior to a god, animal, or object.' My interest in the use of an anthropomorphic visual language is specifically where this involves animal and human content (and does not move into areas of robotics that would require

a different field of study). This raises the question of including 'zoomorphism' as a word of complementary meaning, relating to animal form rather than human form. The OED definition of zoomorphism is: 'the use of animal forms or symbols in art, literature, etc.' At this point I will follow the popular method of using 'anthropomorphism' as a generic word covering all aspects of human/animal hybrid forms in order to create a more concise dialogue, rather than using the more long-winded 'anthropomorphism and zoomorphism', or anthropomorphism/zoomorphism'.

3.2 Historical notes.

Anthropomorphism is not a neutral word, but involves a huge complexity of interpretations ranging from negativity and disgust, through ambivalent and ambiguous attitudes, to complete acceptance and support for its useful employment. S. E. Guthrie (in Mitchel, Thompson and Miles, 1997:53/4) believes that the reason anthropomorphism has been so little analyzed and written about 'is simply that it appears as an embarrassment, an irrational aberration of thoughts of dubious parentage, that is better chastened and closeted than publicly scrutinised.' In contrast Caporeal and Heyes suggest that 'anthropomorphism may be an important means for connecting values to actions for environmental preservation, and too important to discourage, whatever its foundations' (Caporeal and Heyes in Mitchel, Thompson and Miles, 1997:73).

The word anthropomorphism derives from the Greek *ánthrōpos*, meaning human, and *morphē*, meaning shape or form. *Anthropomorphism* and *anthropomorphous* were first used in written text in 1753 (*A supplement to Mr. Chambers's Cyclopædia* · 1st edition, London) while *anthropomorphist* is seen from 1610 and *anthropomorphite* even earlier in 1449. Even before this time the type of thinking that we can now label as anthropomorphic is evident with the earliest representations of hybrid human and animal forms dating to Paleolithic art (40,000 years ago). One of the oldest examples is a small ivory sculpture found in Lowenmensch, Germany, which has a human shaped body and a lion's

head. A more recent cave painting was found at the Trois-Freres Cave (Ariege, France) dating from 13,000BC, which shows a deer like figure with antlers, and an upright human stance. While no one can be sure of why these representations were produced, they are thought to signify great spirits or masters of animals. Archaeologist Stephen Mithen has suggested that because these creative works employed anthropomorphic thinking, they evidence a change from a pre-modern to modern human mind. The capacity for reflexive consciousness and self knowledge made it possible for hunters of wild animals to identify empathetically with their prey and predict their movements more successfully. If such ways of connecting with animals and nature take on highly significant rituals they can develop into animistic, pantheistic and shamanistic type religions, some of which are still seen in the world today (Mithen, 1996).

A descriptive use of anthropomorphic thinking, referred to as anthropotheism, progressed through early religions, where divine beings and gods were given human form or recognisably human qualities in stories, myths, allegories and moral teachings that helped to explain natural phenomena, historical events and man's moral and social duties. The opposite position with man created in the form of a god, and for humans to acquire divine qualities is also present. This may be labeled more strictly as theomorphism, but it is linked to anthropomorphism where gods were believed to take on animal forms. Most importantly to this research, it is through this religious connection that we find the first criticisms of anthropomorphic types of thinking as projecting our own human form onto gods was felt to be blasphemous (Bekoff, 2007b). In the 6th Century BC, the Greek religious thinker and poet Xenophanes wrote:

But if cattle and horses and lions had hands or could paint with their hands and create works such as men do, horses like horses and cattle like cattle also would depict the gods' shapes and make their bodies of such a sort as the form they themselves have' (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

Later philosophical critique date to the 17th century, when Bacon and Spinoza suggested that anthropomorphism was a form of parochialism and therefore a

perceptual and conceptual error (Guthrie in Mitchell, Thompson and Miles, 1997: 51). Here we see the beginnings of the linking of anthropomorphism to anthropocentrism, and the censuring of anthropomorphism because of the tendency to see the human perspective as the main and superior stance.

A more positive attitude to the idea of seeing all life in our own model is taken up in the 18th Century by the philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) who believed this to be a universal human tendency designed to find order in chaos and to make the world more understandable. He links anthropomorphism with imaginative and descriptive writing using literary devices such as metaphor, anecdote and analogy in the form of personifications (Guthrie in Mitchell, Thompson and Miles, 1997: 51). Here it is possible to trace a shift in emphasis from using anthropomorphic descriptions for creatures that were thought to be real, to seeing anthropomorphism as a rhetorical device, a lyrical language to excite the imagination. Taking this view, that anthropomorphism is not a means to definitively answer a problem but is a way of examining arguments, allows anthropomorphism to become a useful tool and model for taking the viewer/reader on an exploratory journey, in a range of discourses and disciplines (Mitchell, Thompson and Miles, 1997:4).

3.3 Anthropomorphic description within the sciences.

Moving into the 19th and 20th Centuries and a vociferous attack on anthropomorphism, largely for its lack of quantifiable accuracy, came from the Western scientific world (Waytz, Cacioppo and Epley, 2007). This then is the second wave of negative criticism (moving from the religious to the scientific), which I believe still creates an underlying sense of unease in the psyche of modern Western man towards the use of anthropomorphism. However, as Nina Britt Varsava notes, this can be seen as a Western problem in the scientific world. For example, Japanese ethologists, because of attitudes grounded in Eastern religions, are disposed to embrace all living creatures as sentient beings, allowing them to value results from emotional reflection just as readily as quantitative data (Varsava, 2007). This inclusive approach to human/animal relationships is an important building block in helping this research move

forward with a positive outlook about anthropomorphism, a theme that will be returned to throughout this thesis.

I will now examine in more detail the two sides of anthropomorphism that are found within science disciplines in more detail: a) as a device for describing humans and b) as a device for describing animals.

3.3.1 Anthropomorphism and the human condition.

In this section I am going to discuss ways that anthropomorphism is particularly observed in the human sciences (psychology, sociology, anthropology), as a device to help us understand ourselves as humans. The questioning of our existence in the world using comparisons to animals or relationships to animals (real and imaginary) can be framed as an examination of anthropomorphism. From this we can gain a clearer picture of how and why anthropomorphic representations have developed as productive forms of our creative cultural output.

There is a good deal of material coming from psychoanalysis and psychotherapy that details relationships to anthropomorphic animals as an example of our capacity for symbolic and creative thinking. It may be problematic if information collected is referring to 'patients', those with difficulties such as extremes of behaviour or psychoses, but the authors mentioned here have taken steps to relate their findings to more generalised psychological and sociological human developments.

In *Playing and Reality* (1971), Winnicott expounds the theory of 'transitional objects' and 'transitional phenomena', which for young children often take the form of animal type soft toys: teddies, rabbits, monkeys, dinosaurs – each having a distinct sensual point of identity, such as a fluffy tail, silky ears, a furry mane. Winnicott states several ways that these animal companions aid both psychological and sociological development in the growing child. Initially the child moves from object relation to object use in forming an attachment that is other than the mother's touch but still in a safe environment. He/she is able to 'create, think-up, devise, originate' about the object and thus enlarges the

capacity for 'symbol-formation' (Winnicott, 1971: 2). Emotional growth needs the development of fantasy – 'the individual's projective mechanisms' and it is from creative living first seen in play that a natural competence for social and cultural experience advances (Winnicott, 1971: 120).

It is undeniable that in many human societies animal representations make up a large proportion of these transitional objects in the form of soft toys, which usually are not made to be realistic or true animal types, but animal stylized forms on which children (and adults) can project human personalities, stories, friendship and so on in a safe environment. So, here we can identify anthropomorphic representations that we recognise from earliest childhood and aid us in developing into healthy adults. From these early beginnings and building on the familiarity of these hybrid animals, possibilities are created for moving into other cultural creative output such as books, films and all manner of media productions where anthropomorphic animal characters are an obvious subsequent step.

Case, also working through psychotherapy, expands on many of the theories initially seen in Winnicott, and has more to say as to why stylized animal companions (real soft toys or imaginary animals) are particularly helpful in aiding the development of human psychological and social competencies. Her practice as an artist and art therapist gives pointers to new thoughts in this area.

Central to this is the knowledge through my own art work, sculpture and painting, that art both expresses and finds form for feeling but is most importantly a way of thinking and reflecting on life experiences nonverbally. Images, both metaphorical and concrete, are the building blocks of emotional learning, expressions of felt life. This develops in parallel to verbal, abstract modes of naming and thinking (Case, 2005: 4).

Case writes about the importance of animal representations because they enabled a degree of contact and imaginative creativity that releases 'the symbolism of the primary process', expressed in visual and auditory imagery rather than in words and language (Case and Dalley, 1992: 143). This view is backed up by Langer who believed that 'the primary thought processes are non

discursive', so that symbolism through the use of animal counterparts can be a way for children to communicate (Langer, 1953: 85).

To use the services of an animal through which to communicate is similar to putting on a mask and allows for greater freedom of expression without fear of being hurt, humiliated or rejected. Taking on an animal persona or using animal companions (represented in toys, images, stories etc.) opens up the concepts of 'dual-identity' and 'second-skin', which relate to escaping the identity of the human self by working through an empathy for a parallel persona. In both of these identities, using an anthropomorphic animal support 'makes it possible to recount a personal history and imagine possibilities for a future' (Case, 2005: 15).

Case points out that we have a contradictory relationship with animals; wanting to both *be* them and distance ourselves from them. By being like us and not like us, relationships with animals (real or imaginary) help us to think about who we are and the demands that humanity places on us. Children can set their own pace for the relationship with an animal (particularly a toy or created animal), which they see as their equal, and feelings of closeness and distance can be played out.

Another aspect of the animal persona, that can occur through childhood and into adulthood, is as a reflection of the unconscious and inner state. This may be of a dark and troubled nature, or an expression of vitality and exuberance wishing to be let out. This can be a positive act, giving us a sense of renewal and a possibility to reconnect to something deeper in ourselves.

Animal images can encompass the ambivalence we hold to our own desires and appear when the conflict between heart and head, passion and thought, nature and civilization, conscious and unconscious, is raging. Conversely animals can also appear as an image of spirit, when the will to live has been low and an anthropomorphic guide from within needs to be externalised to give tangible form to a faint impulse' (Case, 2005: 30).

From human sciences relating to psychological development, it is thus possible to trace anthropomorphism as a human capacity that has aided man's

advancement as an individual and a social being. It should be understood that the type of animal that is being discussed here is an imaginary construct: a toy, a helpful persona, but not relating to any real animal existence.

In *On the Origin of Stories* (2009), Boyd talks about the development of storytelling from oral to written texts and also from factual listing of occurrence, to narrative representation of events, to imaginative fictions. I suggest that a similar progression can be seen in the development of animal characters in fiction, from accounts of animals that interacted with humans (lists of hunted animals, domesticated animals etc), to narrative representations of animals as purveyors of human experiences (religious stories, myths and folktales etc.), to imaginative anthropomorphized animals found in highly developed fictional stories.

It is through stories using animal characters that most people today would be familiar with anthropomorphism. Lippitt writes: '(M)odernity can be defined by the disappearance of wildlife from humanity's habitat and by the reappearance of the same in humanity's reflections on itself...' (Lippitt, 2008: 2). He suggests that we see ourselves more clearly when we are turned into these animal characters – taking a step outside ourselves helps us to think more objectively about our own situation and experiences. This is the basis of the anthropomorphism used in folk and moral tales, which were first disseminated through the rhythms and drama of oral storytelling before becoming written stories (such as Aesop's fables, written around 5th Century BC). Progressing through time and different cultures, the stories that are with us now are subtler in ways of moralizing, often using humour for children or satire for more adult audiences, but the comment from Levi Strauss that 'animals are good to think with' (Levi Strauss, 1962) is still pertinent today.

Researchers into children's literature, Burke and Copenhaver, have remarked on 'the high frequency with which these personally significant stories involve animals possessing human capabilities and characteristics' (Burke and Copenhaver 2004: 206). They believe that anthropomorphism is a way of opening a dialogue with readers, both children and adults, that serves to create

an intellectual and emotional distancing from life problems and allows life choices to be questioned through the writing; enabling a deeper critical engagement and understanding.

When the political, religious, social or personal risks are high, when we are standing close to the metaphoric fire, the use of animals has long provided intellectual and psychological distance and allowed us to critically explore that which we would not be comfortable exploring directly (Burke and Copenhaver, 2004:207).

Forrest, Goldman and Emmison (in J.Knight, 2005) relate that the usual explanation as to why animals are used in children's stories is that they are less threatening and sustain the audience's attention. However, we should not be misled here into thinking that anthropomorphism, even when relating to children's literature, is only seen in a cosy and amusing portrayal of lovable characters. In *Anthropomorphism, Anecdotes and Animals*, (1997), Guthrie notes that the presence of anthropomorphism can often alarm us, 'it is rooted in a strategy that usually is out of our awareness and always is out of our control' (Guthrie in Knight, 2007: 57). In my experience, there are people who find any representations of animal/human hybrids to be disturbing, even to the point of feeling horror and disgust. This may relate to Freud's 'concept of the uncanny' where a thing may be disturbing because of its familiarity and strangeness, its 'like-me' and 'not-like-me'. These aspects can also be used creatively, as properties of anthropomorphism and within a storytelling framework. For fans of 'furry' type genres, for example, the strangeness and amorality of hybridization across species is pushed to an extreme to titillate and excite.

It has traditionally been those animals that we have domesticated (such as dogs and cats) and those that are closest to us on the phylogeny scale (such as monkeys and bears), that are most readily seen through anthropomorphism as lovable familiars, and those outside these areas (such as insects and reptiles) who we are less comfortable with. (Myers, 1998:78). Popular illustrators and animators, since the 19th Century, including Griset, Grandville and Starevich, have broken down these species barriers to produce unusual characters of

lizards, bees, grasshoppers and so on and there is no doubt that a diversity of creature taxonomy, arousing a range of emotions and reactions, has become part of the modern use of anthropomorphism in storytelling.

Moving on into the 21st century and anthropomorphism is updated with modern forms of media presentation, where it is still seen to be a popular device for attracting viewers and certainly successful at selling products. Anthropomorphic animals can convey messages that might be threatening or politically incorrect if human actors were used. 'Anthropomorphized fictions allow for 'a 'soft' allegorical approach to portraying didactic and commercial messages to both children and adults' (Forest, Goodman and Emmison , in Knight 2005: 141).

There is now an 'intertextuality', with children moving between TV programme, film, book and toy and any characters needing to be effective across all platforms (Forest, Goodman and Emmison in Knight 2005: 156). We should be aware of the range of possible agendas that are being presented – different experiences are using animal characters to entertain, to educate and to manipulate. A modern day problem arises when all relationships with animals are 'virtual' and mediated through some form of created text or image and children have very little experience of real animals. Anthropomorphic representations can then dominate at the expense of information about real animals. Here, again, there is academic debate about the negative influence of anthropomorphism in our present culture (Michel and Roebbers, 2008).

This brings us to the anthropological work of Tim Ingold; Knight; Daston and Mitman and others, who investigate relationships between humans and animals and the effects of these interactions for human cultural development. According to Ingold, within hunter gatherer and pastoral societies of today, reflecting more primitive societies in history, there is interdependence between animals and humans such that relationships are continuous between humans and humans or animals and humans. Western Christian religions have promoted the idea that man has dominion over all animals which has led to dualistic and hierarchical thinking based on 'humanity' versus 'animality'. Non-western societies,

however, may understand that animals and humans ‘participate in the same world of *persons*’ (Ingold 1994:xxiii).

At this point we will move into areas of research that take animals to be the focus of anthropomorphic descriptions in order to gain a balanced view of the part that both humans and animals might play in an anthropomorphic visual language.

3.3.2 Anthropomorphism and Animal Consciousness

Anthropomorphism as a concept is used in animal sciences such as biology, ethology and primatology to describe animal behaviour as if it is the same as or comparable to human behaviour. This, then, is different to the type of anthropomorphism recounted in the last section (Anthropomorphism and the Human Condition), where humans were the subjects, portrayed through the descriptive device of comparison to animals. Once again, the use of anthropomorphism has a history of being in and out of favour, with criticism largely focused on labeling anthropomorphic descriptions of animal life as ‘unscientific’ and lacking in appropriate rigour (Kennedy, Wynne, Davis, Fisher). It is my belief that the once overwhelming influence of scientific based research in forming academic arguments has brought about a general disdain for the use of anthropomorphism, this spilling over into areas outside the scientific.

The use of the word anthropomorphism to describe a comparison of animal to human capacities was first made in 1860 by George Herbert Lewes, who studied molluscs. From Lewes’ point of view, comparing human sight to the light gathering faculties of shelled creatures was an erroneous step and thus anthropomorphism was from this starting point linked to misconceived and scientifically inaccurate descriptions: ‘We speak with a large latitude of anthropomorphism when we speak of the ‘vision’ of these animals....’ (Lewes in Wynne 2007:126).

Darwin (perhaps the most famous naturalist because of his work on evolution), does not actually use the word anthropomorphism in his writing, but his mode of writing is certainly full of comparative description of animal and human

behaviour and therefore has 'anthropomorphic intent' (Wynne, 2007a: 126). George Romanes was a key follower of Darwin and also wrote purposefully in terms of analogies between humans and animals, particularly concerning the awareness of emotional states (Romanes, *Animal Intelligence*, 1883 cited in Wynne 2007a: 128). Evolutionists, such as Darwin and Romanes, saw the differences between human and non-human animals as qualitative rather than quantitative – a difference by degree, with all animals having some sense of feelings, emotions and thought patterns: "...the lower animals, like man, manifestly feel pleasure and pain, happiness and misery" (Darwin, 1872:69).

Ten years later in *Introduction to Comparative Psychology* (1894), Conwy Lloyd Morgan wanted to constrain a tendency for anthropomorphism and promote more objectivity in scientific writing about animals. John B. Watson (*Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It*, 1913) also made a strong critique, labeling anthropomorphic comparisons as 'absurd'. Here we see the turn from the Evolutionists to the Behaviourists who wanted a new, objective language based on factual evidence and data gathered through careful testing (Horowitz in Bekoff, 2007b).

In the 1930's the new academic discipline of ethology emerged, which was particularly concerned with the study of animals in natural habitats rather than laboratory situations. Two prominent exponents in the 1950s, Tinbergen and Lorenz, brought comparative psychology to the study of animals. Their methods involved empathizing with animals, often using anthropomorphism to imagine their mental states. They believed that animals were capable of experiencing many of the same emotions as humans (Horowitz in Bekoff, 2007b).

By the latter part of the 20th century the critique of anthropomorphic descriptions had become tied into a debate about animal consciousness; whether animals have the capacity to think and feel in a similar way to humans. In 1992, Kennedy published his major work, *The New Anthropomorphism*, which calls for a constant vigilance against the use of anthropomorphic language. The book is based on the argument that there can only ever be anecdotal evidence to confirm animal consciousness and not scientifically proven facts. 'If the study of animals

is to mature as a science, the process of liberation from the delusions of anthropomorphism must go on' (Kennedy, 1992: 5). Followers of this view include Hank Davis who believes using anthropomorphic thinking to be a form of 'intellectual laziness' (Davis in Mitchell, Thomas and Miles, 2007: 336) and Fisher, who suggests that putting human traits onto animals is a 'category mistake' (Fisher, 1996). Wynne, whilst praising the modern interest for studying animal behaviour, warns that 'the reintroduction of anthropomorphism risks bringing back the dirty bath water as we rescue the baby' (Wynne, 2004).

Daston and Mitman raise a further issue that underlines a moral as well as an intellectual critique of anthropomorphism: to say that animals think like humans is 'self-centred narcissism: one looks outward to the world and sees only one's own reflection mirrored therein' (Daston and Mitman, 2005: 4). Knight picks up this argument in *Animals in Person* and relates that anthropomorphic description can tend to treat animals as 'passive objects of human activity rather than active subjects or agents in their own right' (Knight, 2005:1). Serpell highlights a particular worry that the desire for physical or mental traits in animals to have similarity to those of humans can lead to particular sorts of abuse, for example as seen in the extreme breeding of some pets. (Serpell, 2002)

In defense of using anthropomorphic language, Spada and Mitchell consider that it is not possible to step outside ourselves to have a neutral language, 'an amorphic point of view', with which to describe behaviour (Mitchell in Daston and Mitman, 2005: 103; Spada in Mitchell, Thompson and Miles, 1997:42). Lockwood goes further to suggest the inadequacy of a restricted formal scientific language for describing interactions with animals, as this results in detailed measuring of trivial events rather than allowing more expansive and expressive research possibilities (Lockwood, 1985). Karlsson believes that if we try to avoid analogies comparing animals with humans we will inevitably turn to mechanistic language that compares living animals to dead machines. By making anthropomorphic projections we do acknowledge that animals are 'fully living beings with agency and a certain authority' (Karlsson, 2012).

Evidence shows that many people who undertake scientific fieldwork, and those who build up close working relationships with animals, find a beneficial effect in relating animal and human behaviour, because the anthropomorphic thinking can give a 'way in', a starting point for examination and a useful guide for predicting future behaviour of animals (Daston in Daston and Mitman, 2005:52). Asquith, working in primatology, recounts that '...discussions of anthropomorphism in modern animal studies can help us to acknowledge different kinds of knowledge of animal and human lives, and different ways to access them' (Asquith, 2011: 244). For Lockwood, using anthropomorphism as part of a study allows for 'vital questioning' and 'more nuances and textured accounts' to proceed (Lockwood, 1985).

Present day advocates of anthropomorphism are trying to move away from negative criticism by refining working practices and identifying particularly productive aspects of anthropomorphism. Labels of 'Critical Anthropomorphism' and 'Biocentric Anthropomorphism' help to highlight this. Gordon Burghardt first introduced the term 'Critical Anthropomorphism' in 1985 in a wish to promote a combined study of animals using both scientific and empathetic approaches. As scientific understanding progressed concerning the underlying anatomical, physiological and pharmacological aspects of emotional states, the parallels between humans and a wide variety of other animals were brought to light. Critical Anthropomorphism used phenomenological accounts and anthropomorphic description to recount these 'commonalities in experience and observable similarities' within a rigorous study of the context in which any behaviour occurs (Burghardt, 1985).

Burghardt gives this overarching description of achievable research: 'careful replicable observation, including knowledge of the natural history, ecology, and sensory and neural systems of animals' (Burghardt in Mitchell, Thompson and Miles 1997). He considers the following analytical tools to be useful for investigation work: 'words, pictures, sounds, bodily experience, powerful narrative format, often reinforced with photography and videotape.' In addition he talks about the importance of evaluating the information that has been

forthcoming from any comparative empathy, so that increasingly more refined predictions of animal behaviour can be made. Burghardt uses the word 'private experience' (derived from the behaviourist B.F. Skinner's "private events") rather than 'consciousness' when describing animal behaviour, believing this type of exact attention to language to be essential (Burghardt, 2004). All of these processes, then, have allowed 'Critical Anthropomorphism' to gain validity.

Mark Bekoff coined the term 'Biocentric anthropomorphism' to highlight his belief that anthropomorphic descriptions were not inserting something human into animals, but were identifying commonalities and using human language to communicate these observations:

Anthropomorphism is a much more complex phenomenon than we would have expected. It may very well be that the seemingly natural human urge to impart emotions onto animals - far from obscuring the "true" nature of animals - may actually reflect a very accurate way of knowing (Bekoff, 2007).

Since the 1990s studies of animal behaviour have become linked to ethical and ecological concerns and specific ways that anthropomorphism can help to bring richer understanding of the relationships between all living creatures have been advocated. Indeed many scientists feel that support for animal welfare and conservation issues would be very much poorer without the empathy that anthropomorphism brings.

By enabling us to participate in nonhuman lives not just as observers but as active social partners, anthropomorphism provides us with a unique opportunity to bridge the conceptual and moral gulf that separates humans from other animals (Serpell in Daston and Mitman 2005:132).

Once again the research comes to a juncture where the lives of animals and humans are described as interconnected. Whilst understanding criticisms about using anthropomorphism to describe animals, I have a firmer platform to see the positive aspects of using anthropomorphism and ways that the hybrid nature of this visual language can be employed creatively to highlight relationships and express emotional connectivity.

3.4 Philosophical attitudes to animals and the representation of animals.

In this section of the thesis I look at ways of thinking about animals that are understood as 'modern' or 'Continental' philosophical approaches. This takes a slightly different path than the examination of 'anthropomorphism' as such, but reviewing a range of attitudes relating to animal life in this way enabled me to return to anthropomorphism with an expanded understanding of possibilities for creative work. Here I will give a brief history of the ways in which animals have been linked to the philosophical notion of 'the other', which I found to be a useful line of exploration – working beyond early hierarchical divisions between humans and animals to more contemporary notions of human/animal interconnections. Aspects of environmental aesthetics are also used to examine different ways of knowing animals, particularly through the experience of shared environments.

In the last 30 years there has been an upsurge of interest in thinking about the role of animals in modern lives, including working animals, wild and feral animals, animals as pets, and as food. An awareness for animal welfare and our ethical responsibilities to animals has also developed, with 'speciesism', first used by Singer in 1975 (Singer, 1975) becoming an additional political/ideological grouping running alongside sexism, racism, ageism and so on. From the 1990s there has been a development of academic disciplines that have an overarching interest in exploring relationships between humans and other animals, and researchers working in arts and media, anthropology, geography, psychology, biology and more, have come together under the titles of Critical Animal Studies (CAS), Human Animal Studies (HAS), Zooanthropology and Anthrozoology. Their work "explores the spaces that animals occupy in human social and cultural worlds and the interactions humans have with them' (DeMello, 2012: 4). Representations of animals in art, literature and film are an integral part of this discourse and play a part in forming our cultural attitudes to animals, with an overlapping of the real and metaphorical, the imaginative and virtual; raising questions not just about the historical significance of animals, but also ' what they might yet be *made to signify*' (Baker, 2001:xxxvi).

Much of my work in this section comes out of links with the British Animal Studies Network based at Strathclyde University, which has allowed me to attend conferences in Exeter, Glasgow and Utrecht. Whilst I found extreme views concerning animal rights and animal welfare difficult (especially 'active' in Critical Animal Studies), the collaborative nature of cross disciplinary ideas has furnished me with valuable insights into different approaches to viewing representations of animals, especially concerning attitudes to the use of anthropomorphism as an expressive language.

3.4.1 The animal 'other' and the animal gaze.

Throughout western cultural history, separating ourselves from other animals has been used to mark humans out as superior, leading to a range of ideas that are contradictory. On the one hand our *animal* nature may be seen as a base characteristic in need of control, reflected in negative descriptive language such as calling a person a beast, a brute, an animal or even more pointedly, a pig, a slug, a toad! Comparison between animal and human is made to demean the human. In another context, the side of a personality most relating to animal nature can be seen as an inspirational free spirit to be applauded (relating to work of Rousseau and the Romantics). What has developed from these dichotomies and hierarchical judgments is the sense that 'anthropocentrism' has been a driving force behind much of the research into connections between humans and other animals. That is, by always taking human capacities as the starting point and gauge for examination, other creatures can then only be seen as lacking in comparison. A starting point for this attitude emerged in the 17th Century with the work of Rene Descarte (1596- 1650), who said that animals were like machines, unable to reason or feel pain. For him, evidence of reasoning came through language, and animals unable to communicate through human language, were therefore unable to reason. Much of the philosophical writing about animals, from the time of Descarte through to contemporary Animal Studies work, has been made as some form of response to this judgmental view that in effect gave credence to subsequent mis-use of animals by categorizing

them as non-thinking, non-feeling entities; objects to be used or studied rather than subjects with their own forms of agency.

In the 18th Century, Hume (1711-1776) contested the Cartesian view of animals stating, 'no truth appears to be more evident, than that beasts are endow'd with thought and reason as well as men.'³ Hume said that reason was defined as the forming of associations with past experience, and he used analogy to compare the similarities between animals and humans. Since the behaviour of animals closely resembles that of humans, this must be a result of similar associations being formed in their minds. Kant (1724-1804), however, while accepting that both animals and humans had desires that compelled them to act in certain ways, believed that only humans were capable of standing back from their desires to choose an appropriate course of action. According to Kant, as animals do not have this sense of will, they cannot have a moral or good will, and this leaves them with no intrinsic value.

In the 19th Century, philosophy which made some reference to animals was largely concerned with a questioning of what made us human, using comparisons with things outside ourselves to highlight human capacities. This is the notion of 'otherness' arising as a means of transforming differences into oppositional type thinking. Two groups are created – one that embodies the norm, and the other that is defined by its lacking of certain attributes, which then may become a cause for devalue and discrimination. Hegel (1770 -1831) offered a theory that humans were social beings and could only find themselves in relationship to others: 'I cannot examine the single self and reach any conclusions because I do not exist in isolation from other selves, and my introspection must of necessity be based on an examination of my relationship with others' (Berenson, 1982).

Husserl (1859-1938) set out three stages of knowing 'the Other' in relation to ourselves: the first stage involves recognizing a body, the second stage entails recognizing similarity in appearance to one's own body, and the third stage includes understanding that the Other has a hidden psychic dimension or inner

³ Viewed at the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/ani-mind/#SH1a>

spirit (Cornwell, 1998). Whilst this may appear to give agency to 'others', there is some criticism that this was only achieved through solipsism.

In the 20th century animals became included in the debate about 'otherness'. Heidegger (1889-1976) felt that there was a way of knowing 'the other' through 'a primordially existential kind of Being, which, more than anything else, makes such knowledge and acquaintance possible' (1962, 161). This form of 'being with' he called 'Dasein'. For many researchers in Animal Studies this is seen to be the beginning of modern thought about animals. However, Heidegger went on to state that while humans are 'world-forming', animals are 'poor in world', thus still maintaining ideas of human exceptionalism.

Levinas (1906-1995) also raised the question of the animal as 'the Other' looking at 'the face' as the optimum site of communication and knowing.

The other person is, of course, exposed and expressive in other ways than through the literal face (e.g., through speech, gesture, action, and bodily presence generally), but the face is the most exposed, most vulnerable, and most expressive aspect of the other's presence. (Bergo, 2006)

Through this means Levinas was taking an ethical rather than an ontological approach to 'the other' that would lay the ground for later work in Animal Studies. Levinas himself, however, felt that the animal face did not carry the same significance as the human face – again suggesting a hierarchical divide between humans and other animals.

Through history, thoughts that combine humans and animals have constantly disadvantaged the animal in order to raise the status and ego of the human and this can impact how anthropomorphic imagery is received, particularly when symbolic representations that highlight 'the human condition' and signify nothing about animals seems to reflect the worst sort of hierarchical thinking. Berger calls this a 'reduction' of the animal (Berger, 1980) and for Baker it is a form of 'cultural contempt for animals' (Baker, 2001:90), both understanding that the collection of cultural shared narratives has resulted in a symbolism of stereotypes and clichés rather than a true knowledge of animals. McHugh labels

forms of symbolic animal representations 'human subject in-the-making' and 'the animal-really-means-human', believing that they rely on the 'erasure of the animal' (McHugh, 2011: 7).

This was an important juncture in my own development as a practitioner to understand the nature of criticism that I may come across when wishing to contribute to cross-disciplinary research. It is possible to understand the visual study of animal anatomy and animal movement, and a quest to develop skills in creating representations of animals, as an objectifying of animal bodies in the manner of a Cartesian mind-set. It is only those artists creating animal representations who can know if they have any feeling of relating to the animal presence and spirit or if they are going through a purely conceptual exercise. As Staszack states, 'Otherness is due less to the difference of the Other than to the point of view and the discourse of the person who perceives the Other as such.' (Staszack, 2008). The viewpoint of the artist and the audience may not be in alignment and this is something I will need to address when disseminating my work.

Moving through the second half of the 20th Century, the following philosophers are important in putting forward more positive interpretations of relationships between humans and other animals. Here there is a move away from previous dichotomies of western thinking and possibilities to 're-think the alterity of animals in terms of proximity rather than distance' (Aloi, 2011: 15). These have become a supportive range of ideas to affirm my chosen creative course exploring anthropomorphism as a visual language.

Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) described the self and the 'other' as the 'obverse and reverse of each other', 'relationally constituted via their potential reversibility'. Rather than seeing the observer and the observed as separate and disembodied entities, the self and the other are intertwined and overlap in the shared experience of each other. In this way, there is no denial of the alterity of 'the other', but recognition that the differences between living beings can bring influences and changes on both parties of an interaction. Through phenomenology, this calls for concentration on actual experience as a way of

knowing the world. These ideas brought more positive ways of thinking about similarities between humans and other animals and exploration of a wider range of animal capacities.

Derrida (1930-2004), also wanted to move beyond generic thoughts of a stereotypical 'animal' and, in trying to think about new ways of portraying animals, coined the word 'animot'. This allowed the distinguishing features of different animal species to be just as important as differences between humans and other animals. He posed the question, 'do animals suffer?' using Bentham's ideas of sentient beings, as a way of exploring similarities between humans and other animals (Weil, 2012: 20). In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida wrote about being naked and vulnerable before the gaze of his cat, which Aloï believes 'extensively contributed to the rethinking of the animal from object to subject' (Aloï, 2011: 96). John Berger also brought attention to the 'animal gaze' as a means of highlighting the power the animal brings to encounters with humans. For Berger animals in zoos, behind bars and in urban settings are always 'the observed' and never given credence for observing, but by bringing attention to 'the animal gaze' it is possible to highlight the power that animals bring to encounters with humans (Berger, 1980).

When thinking about the creation of hybrid creatures as anthropomorphic characters, ideas from Merleau Ponty and Derrida would suggest that making a space to represent animal capacities just as strongly as human capacities has a better alignment with the actual experience of our encounters with animals. For example, looking to things like sight, hearing, smell and emotional response rather than relying on language as the main driving mode of narrative gives different possibilities for allowing the animal to emerge. Aloï promotes an approach to animal representation that includes 'the animal body, the animal voice, the animal gaze and the animal trace' (Aloï, 2011: xv). Anthropomorphism can then be seen as a visual language that presents an alternative way of knowing animals, including humans alongside other animal species – making a critique of conventions, hierarchies and commonplace stereotypes in order to present a deeper understanding of the reality of shared encounters. In *Picturing the Beast*, 2001, Steve Baker introduces a potent idea:

For the relation of oppression to work successfully of course, images of the animal body and the human body must be held firmly apart: the self-serving illusion of human superiority demands this (Baker, 2001).

Here we see how, far from being denigrating to animals, the way that anthropomorphism brings animal and human imagery together can be perceived as a means of promoting shared relationships between sentient beings.

3.4.2 Animal relating.

Deleuze (1925-1995) continued the work on shared relationships between animal species by highlighting the learning that takes place during encounters between living creatures:

The Other expresses the same series of relations that we express, but what accounts for their Otherness is that they express some multiplicities more clearly than we do and some less. They represent possibilities we never could have imagined nor perceived otherwise (Deleuze, 1994).

Deleuze and Guattari describe these encounters as 'becoming', when one entity is drawn into the world of another and thereby bringing about a new unity or 'assemblage' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980). They introduce the term 'becoming animal' with the intention to work with intensities and flows of movement as a means to represent and value life (Weil, 2012: 14). According to Susan McHugh, Deleuze and Guattari's approach of becoming animal 'does not fix mutually exclusive or otherwise limiting alternatives, but rather sets all adrift in flows of interrelated potentials' (McHugh, 2011:14). Thinking about the border between different species of animals as being fluid in this way, has tremendous potential for creative ideas using the hybridity of anthropomorphism. The forms of animation film that are presently most popular use industrial pipeline working methods that rely on anthropomorphic characters having a consistent design and structure, based on a reflection of reality albeit within an animated world. But, animation as a medium can readily work in ways that allow mutability and flow-of-form to proceed through a process of discovery. The rendering of animal, human and combined animal-human forms can then, itself, become a means of

interconnecting that is 'holding questions open' rather than creating 'conceptual closure' (Baker, 2001, xvii).

A central theme of contemporary philosophical thought progresses 'ethical relating' to animals (Weil, 2012: 19). Moving from a 'linguistic' to a 'counter-linguistic' to an 'ethical turn' can promote knowledge and understanding that lies outside language (Fudge, 2002:9). Wolfe sees 'the ethical turn' as a way of knowing animals other than through scientific and rational evidences that tend to always compare animals unfavourably to humans (Wolfe, in Weil, 2012: 21). Weil expands on Rilke's idea that language may bring a deflection of real experience, describing 'a desire to know that there are beings or objects with ways of knowing and being that resist our flawed systems of language and who may know us and themselves in ways we can never discern' (Weil, 2012: xxviii). Fudge recognizes that language and naming of animals can be a form of relationship, but the labelling that we choose to adopt can be detrimental to the connections we create (Fudge, 2002: 51). Baker suggests that working with 'pathognomic and physiognomic clues' are a way forward in representing our actual experiences with animals - that is, using facial expression and bodily clues rather than relying any longer on historical and outdated stereotypes (Baker, 2001: 59). Through these ideas it is possible to see that *visual* expression of intuitive and emotional responses to animals may bring creative opportunities that using descriptive language does not, and forms of anthropomorphic representations that do not rely heavily on speech and script may therefore open up a range of approaches that effectively portray our responses to animals.

Any truthful examination of our present shared existence with other animals means facing the realities of 'the pain, suffering, difficulties and confusions' that are involved, which for DeMello becomes a 'post-humanistic' responsibility (DeMello, 2012). Our western culture has made animals both visible and invisible – visible as pets, for example, but invisible as meat; visible when displayed in zoos, but invisible as indigenous species needing to share habitat. Aloi suggests that anthropomorphism plays a large part in demarcating the types of animals that we include in our immediate sphere of reference.

As a result of this reflexive process all the animals that do not lend themselves to anthropomorphic relational modes are excluded, at least for many, becoming invisible and merging with the leafy backdrop. At times, when these creatures are encountered, a sense of disgust, indifference and apathy prevails, so that no relational mode different from that of pure objectification becomes possible (Aloi, 2011: 111).

I would suggest that this is not so when looking at many visual representations of things like insects, reptiles and rodents, particularly in animation, where these beings have found a place as characters. It is true that the special qualities of each individual species are easily subsumed within an anthropomorphism that promotes humour, sentimentality and cute attractiveness as a means to engage a popular audience. Whereas 'aesthetic beauty pleases the eye but is not challenging the brain', our expectations can be confounded by 'the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite' (Julia Kristiva in Aloi, 2011: 42). This, then, gives a lead to ways in which animation can use anthropomorphism to step beyond the superficiality of predictable imagery and begin to engage the viewer through emotional response.

Contemporary researchers in Animal Studies see anthropocentric attitudes as a main concern to address. Haraway has introduced the 'cyborg' as a third element of 'co-evolvement in a post-humanist identity', that is able to subvert the traditional nature/culture, animal /human, male/female dualisms. Animals, humans and cyborgs share environments and resources in 'entanglements' in which there is no place for human exceptionalism (Haraway, 2004). Weil also suggests that we must take on the post-humanist theories that are 'insisting on the intimate entanglement of the human in the material and animal world' (Weil, 2012). Agamben describes the interconnections between living beings as a life forming 'web', 'shaped by a functional rhizomatic unity between animal and animal and animals and environment' (Agamben, 2004). Deleuze and Guattari also talk about 'rhizomes' and Ingold uses the term 'meshes'. All of these approaches are highlighting the inter-dependence of living creatures and the shared experience of environments that link to contemporary concerns for ecology and conservation.

In *A Japanese View of Nature*, Kinji Imanishi brought together philosophy and biology in a pioneering view of ecology. Aloi suggests this work

.....rethinks our understanding of animal, environments and humans by outlining a holistic cosmos where animals are an integral part of environmental systems, and environments are seen as extensions of living beings (Aloi, 2011: 90).

These ideas that raise the importance of environmental connections to animal life have had a fundamental impact on my understanding about working with anthropomorphic imagery, providing contemporary content for personal animation work. From this point in the research, I began to view the imagery I wished to create as an ecological unity of living entities that came together in shared experiences of time and place. I found further links to a range of initiatives including the Deep Ecology Movement, The Gaia Principle, the anthropological work of Bergson, Pierce and Ingold, and the lyrical writing of David Abram; all of which it is possible to see as influential and inspirational to contemporary visual forms of expression seen as eco-art and eco-film works.

In the following section I will review aspects of 'Environmental Aesthetics', defined by Brady as relating to 'environments, natural objects within environments, and natural phenomena and processes' (Brady, 2009). These ideas were critically important to this research project because they helped to open up new lines of development in my own creative work, in particular seeing anthropomorphism as a visual language through which to express responses to animals and environments that came from actual experiences.

3.4.3 Environmental aesthetics.

Before the 18th Century there was little thought of appreciating the environment as a place to be viewed or enjoyed. Any involvement with nature came through work to sustain and maintain life, and contact with natural phenomena often meant unpredictable interaction with untamable forces that could bring either devastation or abundance. In the 18th Century, men started to travel as tourists and take time to view the riches of nature, and philosophers such as Shaftesbury,

Alison, and Hutcheson worked to define the viewing of nature as aesthetic experience. At this time the concept of 'disinterestedness' was developed as the dominant character of aesthetic appreciation describing people to be outside and distant from the things they were observing in nature. This set up a divide that made the natural environment and any creatures or objects within it something 'other' to the human observers themselves, and dichotomies such as nature/culture and human/animal reinforced a feeling of separation from nature. Descriptions of natural objects and phenomena as 'the beautiful' and 'the sublime', most notably developed by Burk and Kant, and 'the picturesque', introduced by Gilpin, expanded the vocabulary of aesthetic qualities. 'The beautiful' relates to the harmonies and neatly proportioned details of natural forms and phenomena. 'The picturesque' can be seen in 'gently irregular and variegated countryside'. In contrast 'the sublime' was 'vast and irregular', presenting 'violent motion and upheaval' (Parsons, 2008).

It was the notion of 'the picturesque' that was to play the largest part in the development of aesthetic ideas moving into the 19th century, as its description of nature was carried through into cultivated gardens and paintings. Thus, the philosophical study of aesthetics became more interested in defining man's appreciation of his own cultivated artifacts and art, rather than nature. In the mid 20th century, the concept of 'disinterestedness' as the most appropriate stance for aesthetic appreciation of artworks came under pressure, with exponents of Expressionist Theories wishing to make work representing their inner states of consciousness. The painting of extremely detailed realistic scenes, prevalent in the Romantic Period, now gave way to stylized compositions: exuberant line, abstracted form, dynamic colour and texture; all intending to portray or stimulate a heightened state of emotional arousal, connecting the artist and the viewer of the artwork to an intensity of experienced life (Carlson and Berleant, 2004: 14).

In the second half of the 20th Century, there was a return to nature as a place for aesthetic contemplation with the upsurge in interest for ecological and environmental issues. In 1966 Ronald Hepburn wrote *Contemporary Aesthetics*

and the Neglect of Natural Beauty (reproduced in Carlson and Berleant, 2004: 42-62), which became a seminal article for the defining of 'Environmental Aesthetics' as a major new area of philosophical study that understood the natural world to be 'as emotionally and as cognitively rich as is that of art' (Carlson and Berleant, 2004: 15). Environmental Aesthetics then developed through two lines of approach: one based on a cognitive response and the other on a non-cognitive response. The cognitive approach, promoted by Carlson, takes the stance that, just as art appreciation is informed and enhanced by art history and art criticism, so the appreciation of nature is enlarged by understanding what is present through scientific resources; including knowledge from geology, biology and ecology. Other writers, such as Saito and Hepburn, feel that it is useful to include other sorts of knowledge or understandings such as that of folklore, cultural and religious narratives.

Berleant developed a non-cognitive approach, which is based on immediate sensory responses to environment, which he called 'engagement'. This involves the 'active participation in the appreciative process, sometimes by overt physical action but always by creative perceptual involvement' (Berleant, 2013). This led to a debate that reworked the traditional aesthetic question between 'engaged' (seen as active involvement with) and 'disinterested' (seen as passive looking at) forms of appreciation. This returns to ways of thinking about 'the other' as something to be observed from the outside by a (usually human) subject. Berleant defends the argument that, by not allowing our own interests to interfere, being a 'disinterested' observer can actually release an unrestricted view of something outside ourselves that is not self serving and therefore more truthful of actual experience.

Properly understood, it is the active detachment of disinterestedness that clears the ground for the free activity of imagination, but it is also what keeps it in check, thereby preventing self-indulgent imaginative responses. In freeing the mind from self-interested and instrumental concerns, imagination can underpin appropriate appreciation of the aesthetic object (Carlson and Berleant, 2004: 165).

More recent and individual lines of development within Environmental Aesthetics, that are of particular relevance to this research project, have come from Brady, Carroll and Foster, all of whom extend a non-cognitive approach in which actual experience in nature is of prime importance.

Brady feels that the scientific ways of seeing nature are too restrictive and that a merging of perceptual awareness and imagination brings a fuller experience. He promotes moving through stages of exploration and discovery in order to build new insights and narrative contexts. His idea of 'imagining well' is described as 'spotting aesthetic potential, having a sense of what to look for, and knowing when to clip the wings of imagination'. This prevents the sort of shallow, naïve, and sentimental imaginative outpourings, 'which might impoverish instead of enrich appreciation' (Brady in Carlson and Berleant, 2004: 166).

Whilst Carroll appreciates that scientific knowledge can be necessary to engage with nature, he is concerned that it excludes common appreciative responses that are 'of a less intellectual, more visceral sort' (Carroll in Carlson and Berleant, 2004: 90). Carroll's model of aesthetic appreciation, called 'the arousal model', is based on emotional response and is a way of recognizing our capacity for 'being moved by nature'. This is a possible reaction to both nature and art and can be just as significant and deep as a more informed and intellectually knowledgeable response.

Cheryl Foster has developed awareness for 'ambient' aesthetic responses to nature, and values the enlarging of direct experience through 'sensuous attentiveness' and 'sensuous encounter' rather than dominant narrative lines of thought. Her worry is that the ambient has been marginalized because it is generally subjective in nature, with the value of objective and scientific response more easily quantifiable.

The indexical fallacy occurs not in the practice of narrative appreciation *per se* but in a collapsing of all aesthetic value to the narrative dimension, to the indexical expression of mythological, historical or scientific processes through nature. In over-emphasizing the indexical element of

aesthetic appreciation, philosophers of the environment have allowed the narrative dimension of value to occlude the ambient (Foster in Carlson and Berleant, 2004: 204).

Just as different forms of aesthetic response are being put forward here as ways of appreciating nature and knowing animals as part of this, different forms of animation can be seen to follow similar scenarios: the study of animal anatomy and movement in order to bring a realism to animated characters reflects a scientific and natural history way of knowing animals; character and narrative based animation forms that work with dramatic storylines reflect the mythic and folklore mode of knowing animals. These forms of animation are favouring cognitive ways of knowing animals and that leaves them open to the criticism that they have an underlying anthropocentric bias; that the animals chosen are being looked at, studied, turned into characters that leaves very little of the actual animal remaining and this can be particularly marked when the script becomes the dominant language in the film and textual communication takes precedence over visual and perceptual possibilities.

In looking to find new ways of thinking about anthropomorphic representations in animation, moving away from the dominance of cognitive schemes and allowing the non-cognitive to come forward more strongly, would seem to offer potential for exploring different and original treatments. The discourse about 'the other' presented in this section has enabled additional contemporary ways of thinking about animals to emerge that bring non-hierarchical, non-binary connections into view. I suggest that through the medium of animation the 'animal other' can become the 'animated other', a means not of portraying an animal as such, but of representing responses to relationships between humans and animals, between interconnecting species. Following the work of Brady, Carroll and particularly Foster, grounding the creative work in actual experience in nature has become an important element in a process of discovery. This, then, is where the original practical work in this research is situated.

3.5 Conclusion.

The following points sum up the contribution given by this theoretical research section and indicate the influence it has on the developing practice:

- By examining approaches to anthropomorphism in sciences and philosophy, this section has answered the research questions, 'what is 'anthropomorphism' and 'how is this term used across different fields of knowledge and cultural settings'?
- Psychological and sociological interests in the representations of animals have raised the idea that humans relate to animals through primary and pre-verbal responses and not just through symbolic storytelling. This was the starting point for using this form of perceiving and responding in later practical work.

Through this examination, topics were raised about dualistic, oppositional and hierarchical thinking about animals and more ecological ways of discussing interrelationships between humans and animals emerged. This has given pointers with regard to formulating and answering further research questions about making creative work that a) does not 'promote a strongly anthropocentric bias' and b) responds to 'contemporary issues surrounding human/animal interactions'. These became important influences on the practical work.

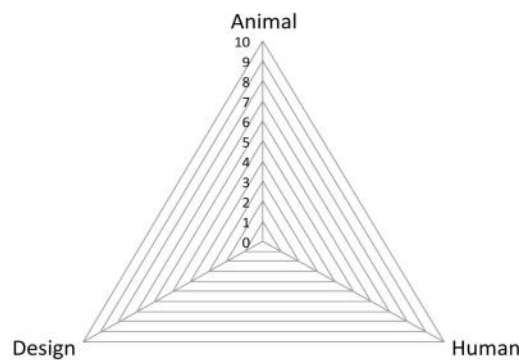
4 Examining Anthropomorphism in Character-based Animation

4.1 Introduction.

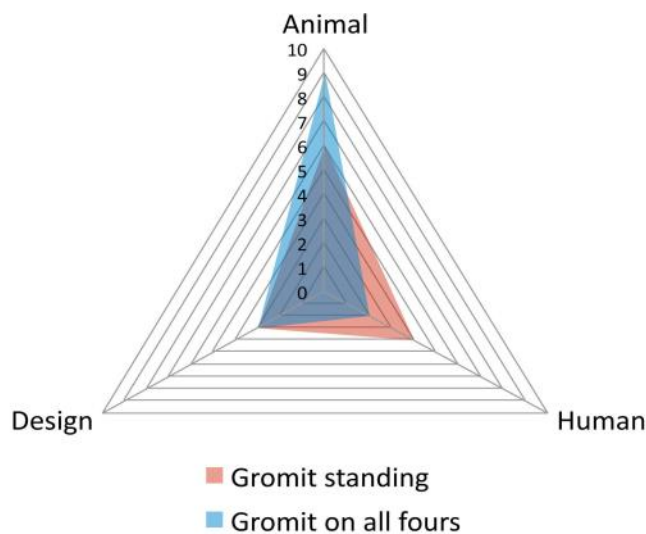
In this chapter I will show how different modes of anthropomorphic characters have developed from the early days of animation through to more contemporary work, in order to provide a context for my practical work. Rather than recounting an exhaustive reference list of films, characters and dates, my focus here is to understand how animation and anthropomorphism have coalesced to present opportunities for a range of character designs to develop. Other researchers of animation have categorised animation characters by taking the cognitive and psychological interpretations as defining points of reference, for example Wells, who formulated the 'Bestial Ambivalence Model'; Klein, who discusses animation character in terms of 'the nuisance', 'the over-reactor' and the 'controller' roles; and Pike, who sees cartoons as 'monologic' and 'dialogic' texts. Here I will be concentrating on visual/aesthetic aspects of design as the basis for classification and a starting point for further character analysis, because my experience as an artist using animation has shown that understanding and working with the potential of the imagery is crucially important to watching and creating animation. I believe this is a way of analyzing animation that highlights the animal elements present in the anthropomorphic characterization and therefore is a way of answering the research question relating to creating less 'anthropocentric-bias' in anthropomorphic animation work. From this it is then possible to reflect on the potential of anthropomorphic visual language for future practical animation work.

Taking the scale and grid of anthropomorphic reference that I devised for a paper at Exeter University as a starting point (shown in Appendix 1), I have identified three lines of progression that provide categories for analysis in which characters are 'animal-led', 'human-led' and 'design-led' and these will be discussed and illustrated in the following three sections. In Fig 13 these three categories are plotted onto a spider diagram with two versions of the Aardman character Gromit as an example. Each character will be scored as to how much

animal (for example including fur or feather texture, animal anatomy and posing on all fours), human (for example including clothing, human speech or a standing pose) or design (for example if texture is reflecting the animation materials, the character anatomy is exaggerated for expressive animation movement) is in the character make-up. This gives a shape on the spider diagram for each character version. These shapes can then be useful in analysing character types, for instance to compare consistency between characters in one film or to think about character design at the start of a new project.



Spider diagram skeleton showing three points of reference: animal, human and design; onto which anthropomorphic characters can be plotted using a scale of 1 to 10.



Plotting two version of the Aardman character Gromit

Fig 13. Spider diagram for plotting and analysing anthropomorphic characters. Gill Bliss 2016

Whilst acknowledging that 'precisely defined categories' can be problematic and animation practice works through 'continuums' of interlocking ideas (Furniss, 2009), I feel that this structured approach is initially helpful in identifying and analysing directions of thought that are pertinent to the development of anthropomorphic representations. For each category it is then possible to recognise a historical starting point for character types, and developments in more contemporary work that raise additional points of interest. But, understanding each category as a 'way in to' pertinent thoughts ultimately brings a better interpretation of this work, rather than trying to find strict borders defining each category.

4.2 'Human-led' anthropomorphic characters

In *Before Mickey*, (1982) Crafton has identified 'Old Doc Yak' (created by Sidney Smith in 1913), as the first significant animal protagonist in animation. Although the films are now lost, the character was transferred from Smith's newspaper comic strip 'Buck Nix', and it is possible to see the style of drawing used from this. Many of the early workers in the American animation industry had learned their craft through working in graphic art – newspaper illustration, cartooning and advertising. These included Windsor McCay, John Bray, Paul Terry, Max and Dave Fleischer, Walt Disney, Walter Lantz and Tex Avery. Business deals for producing animation were first tied to newspapers and it was not until the early 1930's that the Hollywood film studios took over the role of distributors of these films. It was a very easy step then, to translate the short form of one-step gags from newspaper comic strips into drawn, moving image work.

Anthropomorphic characters were very popular in American cartoon strips of the early 20th Century, following on from the European satirists such as Grandville and Griset. Klein also mentions the work of book illustrators such as Doyle, Rackham and Gillray as being influential (Klein, 1993: 13).

Looking at the images in Fig 14, it is clear that Old Doc Yak was actually a goat, a family man with a son called Yutch, and other characters included a mix of exotic and native animals. The anthropomorphic styling shows all the characters had a range of animal heads, but everything else including stance and movement,

hands and lack of tails, was human in form. Every character was dressed in elaborate clothing with details of frock coats, pocket watches and starched collars.



Fig 14. *Old Doc Yak*, comic strips created by Sidney Smith 1908-1919.

The characters, while not heard speaking, were portrayed as if having human language through silent film devices of 'intertext' cards that gave a comic response to action and speech bubbles with character dialogue. Animated movement was at an early stage of development – jerky and erratic, but these anthropomorphic characters were replacement people and the drawn bodies were shown moving in conventional, if comic, human situations. Baker has called this type of character 'therianthropic' in that it is 'combining the form of a beast with that of a man' (compared to a 'theriomorphic' figure that has 'the form of a beast.') (Baker, 2001:108).

The humorous storylines of *Old Doc Yak*, played out through one-shot gags, showed the absurdities of *human* failings and domestic mishaps. These animations were made for adults and the situations were commenting on human experience and concerns, using satire to add a layer of meaning to the comic gags. Once an understanding of this type of layering is achieved, it is possible for the anthropomorphic styling to present symbolic meanings through many elements. The clothing worn, the presence of objects and settings and relationships between interacting characters may reflect social conditions at the time of making the animation, whether through their unconscious inclusion, or as the intentional choice of a carefully selected visual language. The selection of particular animals used for these characters can give a distinctive addition to

this, making reference to the visual qualities of the animal forms themselves, such as the long neck of a giraffe in the illustration shown in Fig 14 or making use of a visual shorthand that relates to universal and cultural knowledge about animal representation, such as stereotypical ideas of pigs being greedy, lions being brave, sheep being woolly headed and so on.

Right from the early days of production, animation companies were under pressure to create films to shorter deadlines and under economic constraints. The amount of detailed redrawing necessary for the 'human-led' anthropomorphic characters created a problem, even with the more efficient working pipelines that cell animation brought. So these character types fell out of favour, and simpler more stylized animal forms began to dominate popular animation (examined in 4.4. Design Led Anthropomorphic Characters.)

In 1972, Ralph Bakshi took the ability of animation to work as social critique to a new dimension in his controversial and X-rated film, *Fritz the Cat* (Fig 15).



Fig 15. *Fritz the Cat* created by Ralph Bakshi, 1972

This was a full-length drawn animation of Robert Crumb's anthropomorphic character, relating his life as a college student in 1970s America. By using anthropomorphic characters as replacement humans, Bakshi was able to subvert

the more usual role of family orientated animation, and include sexually explicit scenes, violence, racism and sexism in a content laced with black humour and irony. Wells comments that:

His representation of the freeing of sexual inhibitions, the street culture of the civil rights movement and the ambivalent place of art in the mid-70s was profoundly important, and in being *about* anxiety, alienation and change, was misunderstood as *promoting* fear and conservatism (Wells 2002:74).

All male characters, including the lead of Fritz, seem to be wearing no trousers – but hands are put into pockets as if the animal fur is a layer of clothing. While female characters are fully clothed in dresses and trousers, when they undress (which occurs very frequently), all appear to have smooth pink skin. This difference between more animal male and more human female is typical of the additional visual language that provides an exciting flow of ideas when watching the film. Other characters make use of stereotypical animal tropes: policemen are pigs and all black sounding characters are crows. But, Bakshi is working these overused anthropomorphic forms in a new way, to challenge the viewer's own prejudices and unquestioned beliefs. Through the animality of all characters the film gives expression to an overarching comment on our everyday lives: that underneath the intellectual, political and social interactions, our animal instincts and animal drives are still present.

In *They Walk, they Talk!* Collignon following Lorenz⁴ states that anthropomorphic representations are 'counter-intuitive', and because they are not as we are expecting to see them (i.e. contain an unexpected degree of animal material) our minds are continually upset and active in searching for human content (Collignon, 2008: 4-5). For 'human-led' anthropomorphic characters, this incongruity can be effective in work that is primarily for adult audiences, bringing an unsettling strangeness of varying degrees. Examples of this can be

⁴ Konrad Lorenz was an Austrian zoologist who is considered to be one of the founders of ethology.

seen in *When the Day Breaks* (1999) created by Wendy Tilby and Amanda Forbis, and *BoJack Horseman* (2014) created by Raphael Bob-Waksberg.

When the Day Breaks was created by making photocopied printouts of frames from live action shots, and working on these with fluid paint and expressive pencil rendering. The scenes are of ordinary lives - a female pig engaged in domestic chores and a male cockerel, who is shopping. The two lives collide and this seemingly insignificant interaction has adverse consequences for both. Tilby and Forbis have made good use of the effects of 'counter- intuitive' strangeness by giving characters animal persona and contrasting this with finely observed details of human clothes, objects, actions and an intense soundtrack of everyday noises and music.



Fig. 16. *When the Day Breaks* by Tilby and Forbis (1999)

Wells raises the point that using anthropomorphic characters in this way can be a device for representing feelings both of connection to and alienation from other living creatures. "Here the animal is the very lifeblood of existence' (Wells 2009: 73).

The American animated sitcom *BoJack Horseman* (Bob-Waksberg, 2014) presents a world where both humans and anthropomorphic animals live side by

side: the main character of a washed up actor is represented as a horse; his agent is a cat, but other friends and adversaries are fully human characters (Fig 17). Here we see the same idea, that the presence of 'human-led' anthropomorphic characters in animated films is immediately visual and unspoken shorthand for reminding us that we are all animals.



Fig 17. *BoJack Horseman* created by Bob-Waksberg (2014).

For Julia Pott, the connection to 'animal' as a natural expressive energy has become linked to a personal symbolism in her autobiographical animated works such as 'Belly' and 'Howard' (Fig 18). The difference seen in her individual visual styling is that the figures contain a mix of animal taxonomy as well as both human and animal content, giving a disjointed fragility and vulnerability to delicately drawn characters. Here we see a contemporary animator 'challenging compositional and representational orthodoxies' and the hybrid nature of anthropomorphism becomes a means to express the disquiet of interior states of mind in flux' (Wells, 2002a: 24).

The animation work described thus far all use 'human-led' anthropomorphic characters to comment on human social, political or personal experiences. It may be questioned whether it is possible to use these types of characters to



Fig 18. *Belly* (Julia Pott, 2010)

make a more overt comment on the lives of the non-human animals which are part of the makeup of these hybrid creatures. *I Am Not An Animal* was, at the time of making in 2004, a strikingly unusual television series made by Baby Cow Animations. The animation was created from photographic collage of animal heads and human clothing, put together in incongruous figures and erratic movement (Fig 19).



Fig 19. *I Am Not An Animal* (Baby Cow Animations, 2004).

The storyline was about a group of animals who escaped from a testing laboratory. These were special animals in that their human traits were amplified, with exaggerated upper class accents and intellectual sensibilities: Philip Materson-Bowie (a horse), Winona Matthews (a dog), Kieran (a cat) and other characters wanted to find a suburban home where their skills would be appreciated. Beyond the first episode, the everyday middle-class lives of the characters became the driving force of the largely script based satirical humour and the opportunity to introduce overt critique of vivisection or other animal welfare issues was lost. However, while the jarring effect of the visual qualities could be seen to add humour to the work, it was also an important factor in signalling what was an unavoidable connotation: the premise of the work had set up an ongoing consideration of differences and similarities between ourselves as viewers and the animals that are, every day, being tested in laboratories.

‘Human-led’ anthropomorphic characters take on a different guise in animated work created for family viewing particularly films that are adaptations of children’s stories, such as *Wind in the Willows* (Kenneth Grahame, 1908) and *Fantastic Mr Fox* (Roald Dahl, 1968), both of which use stop-motion animation that affords the construction of completely contained worlds. The anthropomorphic characters are seen to act, think and speak as humans, but this is a differently realised reflection of human nature set in essentially parallel or complementary worlds to our own, rather than a reflection of ordinary human life made strange in order to highlight social or political issues. Children are able to work through anxieties and struggles in the safety of these environments. (See a more detailed account of social and child development and anthropomorphism in Section 3.3.1)

Collingnon, following Lorenz, says that in order for anthropomorphic characters to be successful as being ‘in the stead of a human’ they must allow viewers to recognise psychological character allegiances, for example good or bad, male or female (Collingnon, 2008). Stop motion animation is an ideal medium for this work, allowing the possibility for finely crafted detail of bodies, clothing, sets and props to provide the necessary human ‘realizers’. Wells suggests that by being

able to project close similarities between animals and humans, the anthropomorphic visual language works with 'approximations' (Wells, 2009: 82/3). Certainly there is a constant process of decision making in the designing, construction and animation of these characters as to how the animal and the human aspect can play out; are the hands to be more like human fingers or animal paws, are unclothed areas to have a covering of animal fur or the smoothness of human skin; will a particular hybrid body construction allow a certain human or animal movement? In *Fantastic Mr Fox*, we are suddenly confronted with the animality of the central character when he eats a meal and devours the food, losing all sense of human polite behaviour (Fig 20).

A similar attention to detail in CGI can bring an unfortunate sense of men wearing animal masks or dressed in animal suits as is demonstrated in the Kia advert that uses hip young hamsters squeezed into small cars and dancing through rap sequences (Fig 21).



Fig 20. *Fantastic Mr Fox* (Anderson, 2009)



Fig 21. Kia Soul, Hamster Transformers Commercial (2014)

In *Picturing the Beast* (2001) Steve Baker discusses the pleasure brought to our culture through animal stories and ‘talking animals’; a pleasure that he describes as being taken ‘unselfconsciously and apparently quite genuinely’, outside the intellectual and sophisticated analysis that finds stimulation in discovering layers of symbolic references and satirical projections. While a dominant motivation for using and analysing ‘human-led’ anthropomorphic characters throughout the history of animation has focused on the *human* element of the hybrid creatures portrayed in this format, it is also possible to identify primal feelings raised by these combined human/animal characters, which exposes the nature of the *animal* content and possibilities for representing emotional connections between living beings. Undertaking this project of research, I realised that it was these aesthetic responses, largely carried in the visual aspects of animated images and movement, that I was interested to move forward with in my practical work.

4.3 ‘Animal-led’ anthropomorphic characters.

In this section I will be examining the aesthetic possibilities of a range of anthropomorphic animation characters that have a strong presence of an animal as animal. Whilst there must be an inclusion of human elements to some degree in these characters, in order that they are identified as anthropomorphic, the

designers/animators have a starting point of working from an animal and retention of the animal identity as an important factor. What has emerged in this section of work is a questioning of the extent that a relationship to *realism* of the animal form, structure and movement is a dominant factor in the creation of this type of anthropomorphic character. More points of interest examine the capacity of such characters for reflecting the lives of non-human animals, rather than resorting to the familiar discourse that presents anthropomorphic imagery as a means to examine 'the human condition'.

4.3.1 Earliest examples of animal-led animation characters.

The work of Vladislav Starevich (Władysław Starewicz)(1882 - 1965) is notable for the use of actual animal bodies as animation puppets and these are the earliest anthropomorphic characters seen in stop-motion animated films. As an entomologist and Director of the Museum of Natural History in Kaunas, Lithuania (1910) Starevich had a knowledge and familiarity with insects. Combining this with an interest for filmmaking, he made four live-action documentaries for the museum. Finding that the live insects were difficult to control and often died under the film lighting conditions, and inspired by seeing Emil Cohl's work with animated matches (1908), Starevich found more success with turning the dead bodies into wired puppets which could then be moved with intricate detail. His first stop motion animated film (*'Lucanus Cervus'*, 1910) depicted a battle between two stag beetles and was essentially an information film about these creatures. After a move to Moscow in 1911, Starevich made two- dozen animated films with the Khanzhonkov film company in which he was able to explore the storytelling potential of his animal animation characters. After the October Revolution, 1917, Starevich moved to France (changing his name to Ladislav Starevich) and finally settled in Fontenay-sous-Bois in 1924, where he continued to develop puppet animations with the help of his wife and daughter.



The Grasshopper and the Ant (Starevich, 1911)



The Cameraman's Revenge (Starevich, 1912)

Fig 22. The Stop Motion Animations of Ladislav Starevich

Starevitz used animation to develop allegorical storytelling in a similar manner to that of Eastern European Folk Tales and Puppet Theatres familiar in his childhood (Danks, 2004) and his focus was therefore to use the animated characters as a means to comment on human existence. My argument in discussing Starevich's animation under 'animal-led' anthropomorphism rather than the previous category of human-led anthropomorphism is to recognize the important aesthetic effects brought about by the undiluted nature of the characters' animal corporeal presence, particularly in the earliest of his films. In *The Grasshopper and the Ant* (1911), *The Insects Christmas* (1911) and *The Cameraman's Revenge* (1912) we see a range of insects: beetles, grasshoppers, ants, that are made extraordinarily strange because of their animated performances (Fig 22).

Common to all Starevich's films is a playing out of tensions between animality and humanity, where he sometimes invests creatures with particularly sympathetic and anthropomorphic characteristics only to surprise the viewer by then depicting their baser animal nature.....(Wells, 1998: 63).

At this time in the history of filmmaking, before synchronized sound was developed, much of the storyline and any dialogue was added by using written cards between shots. This means that they are not 'talking animals', and it is the unmediated nature of the animated bodies and movements set in highly detailed strange worlds that creates an intense eeriness. These creatures of diverse taxonomies (insects and reptiles) often provoke very different reactions to the fleshy and cute animal characters that are more usual to animation. I suggest that, when viewed today, it is through an engagement with these remarkable visual qualities, rather than the storytelling development that Starevich progressed with, that gives these films their important potential for stimulating discourse.

Starevich's development of characters moved into more traditional anthropomorphic styling that I call 'human-led', making use for example of clothing and other human attributes. However, some of the later films still retain

a vivid animal quality that jolt the viewer into an uncomfortable awareness of raw nature relating to non-human creatures. In *The Town Rat and the Country Rat* (1926) the straggly fur on pointed ears and noses, the wrinkled hands and sharp teeth come together, arousing feelings of distaste and disgust for creatures that are most often known in a human context as vermin (Fig 23.).



Fig 23. *The Town Rat and the Country Rat* (Starevich, 1926).

These are not characters made humorous by the addition of animal elements - what accentuates their aesthetic influence is the slippage between the grotesque nature of the animated creatures and the familiarity and ordinariness of the detailed settings. Wells comments that Starevich continually shows 'resistance to sentiment and anything which infantilised the form in which he was working' (Wells, 1998: 62). In this way these films can bring awareness for issues that surround the relationships and interactions between human and non-human animals.

The *Police Dog* series (1914-16) shows the development of an anthropomorphic character rendered in a typically American graphic style of black and white drawings. In these cartoons, created by Carl Anderson for the Bray Studios, Pinkerton Pup was a police dog, who managed to get his handler, Officer Piffle, in to trouble in each episode. In the only remaining example, we see the excitable animal chasing a cat and the hapless officer being pulled behind. Bumping across rough ground, through a sewer pipe and into a pond the man loses his trousers

on the way. Text cards add to the humour of the scenes by giving a grandiose description of the action: 'the ever trusty pup.... sights a suspicious character and gives chase', 'Officer Piffle suffers heavy losses in the rear and is dangerously exposed on both flanks', and ' ...Officer Piffle examines the bottom of the pool for possible clues'.

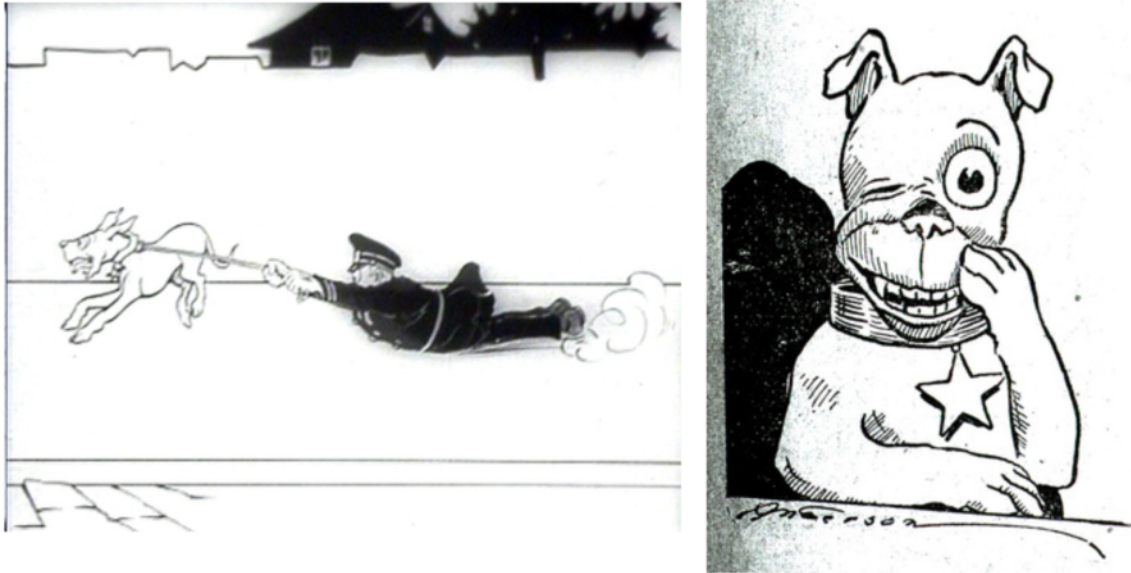


Fig 24. *Police Dog* (Carl Anderson, 1914-18), showing the change in anthropomorphic design.

Initially the dog representations were naturalistic with attention to realistic animal form and movement - indeed, in the first films, there was nothing anthropomorphic about the character. As the series progressed, however, it was realized that a more amusing and engaging main character would emerge if it interacted with the audience through knowing winks and cheeky asides – the animal had developed human consciousness and in this way became one of the earliest 'animal-led' anthropomorphic characters in animation. In later films the animal is given an upright posture and loses its animal nature to such an extent that it moves into being a 'design-led' character. This reflects the fact that giving the dog more human-like capabilities opened up possibilities for the character to show greater participation in humorous antics and more overtly expressed responses (Fig 24).

It was necessary to show these things visually because there was no dialogue through which to communicate. The change in the character design, then, also

indicated a shift from seeing the character as an animal and companion to Officer Piffle, to making Police Dog the main protagonist who would operate in more human type situations.

From the above discussion of early animation work I now suggest that successful 'animal-led' anthropomorphic characters combine: 1) a skill for representing realistic animal form and movement, with 2) an understanding for imbuing the character with an animal related consciousness. Here I will develop these two principle aspects further under the headings 'The animal other' and 'The animal gaze', which are themes I have found useful from my contact with Human Animal Studies (see Chapter 3.3). In this way it will be seen that animation using aesthetic qualities of 'animal-led' anthropomorphic characters can create opportunities for discourse surrounding animal experiences and animal awareness, thus providing an important shift away from dominating human centered storylines that have been criticized as anthropocentric.

4.3.2 The animal other.

Making the study of real animals the starting point for character design and development has become established practice in the animation industry and is also, therefore, part of contemporary training and education for young animators. This is exemplified by the career of Stuart Sumida, who has been working as an advisor on animal films for Disney, Dreamworks, Sony Imageworks, Pixar and other animation companies.⁵ Starting out as a Professor of paleontology, he was able to connect his knowledge of animal anatomy and biomechanics to an interest in animated films. Realizing the need that animators have to understand skeletal and muscular structures in relation to weight and movement of animal characters he has been giving lectures and workshops to animators in education and working studios. In my experience in the animation industry, many character designers and animators working with animal characters have a keen interest in this part of their work, and from it develop in-depth knowledge and respect for the diversity of living creatures that they study

⁵ Biographical details and interview at:
<http://www.scienceandentertainmentexchange.org/article/scientist-spotlight-stuart-sumida>

(Fig 25). It is the further step of interpreting this knowledge that provides a greater or lesser experience of 'animal' for those watching the animation characters, and it is here that differences emerge.

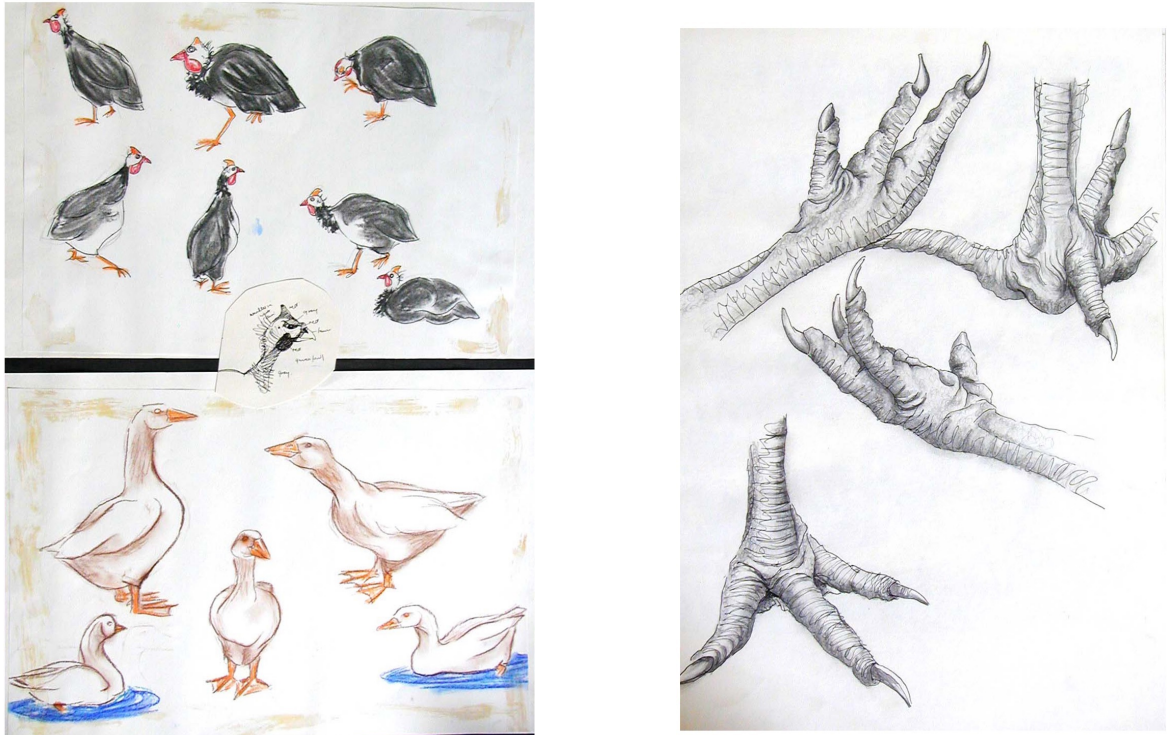


Fig 25. Sketchbook drawings showing life studies of birds. Gill Bliss

In the 'human-led' anthropomorphic characters, discussed in the previous section, the animalness of the hybrid creatures is framed in a way that presents *human* otherness – different ways of thinking about our human condition. By examining similarities and differences between human and non-human animals, and between diverse species of animals - bodies, movements, experiences and consciousness – animators gain valuable understanding of *animal* 'otherness' and this then can also become the focus when creating, viewing and reflecting on animation that includes anthropomorphic characters.

It has been well documented that from the time Disney Studios started producing feature films containing animal characters, Disney insisted his animators attended drawing classes to observe real animals in order to gain understanding of their form, structure and movement and this set the standard for the industry from the 1930s onwards. In *The Animated Bestiary* Wells notes:

'Disney artists, like many others working in animation, engage with animals in a highly serious way in a spirit of representing animals on terms and conditions that both recognize the complexities and presence of animality and the ways that it is best revealed through animation' (Wells, 2009: 77). But, Disney's passion was to elicit emotion and empathy in the family audiences of his films, and design principles that highlighted human traits and greater expression were pushed forward to the detriment of more animal sensibilities. In these types of cute and engaging animal characters, that have become a mainstay of popular animation films, the separation of animal and human has been diminished in a wish to bring humour, affection and association to the story-telling - this then is moving into both 'design-led' and 'human-led' anthropomorphic characters. For my purpose here I will pick out some particular Disney animal characters in which 'animal-led' anthropomorphic qualities *do* allow the 'otherness' of animals to emerge.

There has been criticism of the film *Bambi* created by the Disney Studios in 1940/41, both for its realism and for not being realistic enough. Indeed the hunting lobby in America tried to stop its release fearing a backlash because of the quality of its environmental message, but, on the other hand, it was said to contain stylized distortions and overly dramatic and sentimental story content (Whitley, 2012 and Pike, 2012). It is possible to find a contrasting range of animal characters, some of which show a high degree of realistic representation, such as Bambi's mother and father, and others, like Thumper, which are overly chubby, fluffy and rounded figures. The main character of Bambi certainly has an exaggerated form, with the use of neotony creating a vulnerable and appealing character, but there is enough representation of a young fawn, with his spindly legs and ungainly movements for Bambi to fit into this 'animal-led' character category. A common anthropomorphic element introduced to all of the characters in *Bambi* is that of dialogue; animals speak and converse across species as if they are human. Despite this, there are scenes in the film when the characters' *animal* anatomy and related animal movement becomes important. Whitley suggests that because *Bambi* shows the lifecycle of a particular animal, with a struggle for survival and growth to maturity, this animated film can be

read importantly as 'a fictionalized form of natural history' (Whitley, 2012: 61). Sometimes the realistic representation gives the impact to a dramatic scene, such as the chase of deer through the woods that ends with the death of Bambi's mother. Sometimes the realistic representation creates engaging, comic vignettes such as Bambi's shaky four-legged manoeuvring on the frozen pond (Fig 26).



Fig 26. Bambi with spindly legs, seen as an 'animal-led' character, but Thumper is more generic as a 'design-led' character (*Bambi*, Disney 1940/41).

Through the narrative of these situations, Disney is looking to elicit empathy from the audience through the evoking of a range of emotions such as fear at a sense of threat, pity for a vulnerable small life; arousing the desire for attachment and the innate tendency to care for offspring.

In *Embodied Visions* (2009), Grodal suggests that it is the capacity of animated animal films like *Bambi* and *Finding Nemo* to play through such emotionally charged narratives that makes them attractive to young audiences (Grodal, 2009: 25-31). It is my argument that the additional anthropomorphism that is presented visually in these characters helps the analysis of layers of complexity, providing a way for audiences to examine their attitudes to these animal species and not just to relate the action to their own emotional lives. The specific 'animal-led' aesthetic qualities that we see in the characters is a means for the

audience to witness the separation and alterity of animal lives and it is only the concentrated impact of visual awareness that will do this.

This gives a model for animated films that brings a range of ‘animal-led’ anthropomorphic characters together in one film. Highly realistic animal types are characters that need to show their animal nature in particular scenes, and therefore must have the animal taxonomy to allow truly animal movement to occur, but comic characters, for example, are more stylized in design because they have a different role within the film. This is seen again in the film *Lion King* (1994), with Simba, his father and mother having realistically graphic forms, in contrast to the comic characters of Zazu (the hornbill), Pumba (the warthog) and Timba (the meercat) who have more exaggerated designs (Fig 27). The more extreme of these characters are moving into the design-led category which will be discussed in the next section – their role is close to being human and they do not embody the animal ‘otherness’ found in more defined ‘animal-led’ anthropomorphic characters.



Fig 27. Different types of anthropomorphic characters in *The Lion King* (Disney, 1994).

In the 1967 Disney film *Jungle Book*, Mowgli is befriended by an assortment of jungle characters, including wolves, elephants and apes each having their individual animal qualities that can be contrasted and explored in relation to the human boy's attributes. The main comic character of the bear Bagheera, however, has a design and countenance that is more human or more generic animation design and so does not present the same separation of animal 'otherness' as lesser characters in the film (Fig 28).



Fig 28. *Jungle Book* (Disney, 1967)

This leads into a model for animal-led anthropomorphic characters that developed through Disney films in which relationships between human and animal characters are highlighted. Whitley classifies certain animal characters as 'animal helpers' and 'animal buddies' (Whitley, 2012). I have also found 'companion animals' or 'companion species' to be useful descriptive terms, coming out of my connections to Human Animal Studies research (Haraway, 2004: 301-317). These animal characters can be pets, domestic working animals, or wild animals – the link between them is that their relationships and interactions provide the main human characters, and also then the viewing audience, with an exposure to animal 'otherness'. Whilst animated scenes are of

course fiction and in Disney often overly sentimentalized, questions can be raised and attitudes examined about the relating lives, or the parallel lives of human and non human animals.

In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Disney, 1938), Snow White collects around her the wild animals of the forest, each willing to share in her domestic chores as her lively and caring nature envelops their friendship in the song 'Whistle While You Work.' These creatures are made anthropomorphic because they have been given a human consciousness that allows them to perform the human tasks.



Fig 29. Companion animals in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Disney, 1938).

They are animal-led characters because of the close attention to detail that defines each animal form and the movements that portray the individual nature of their bodies – the squirrels with their flicking tails and the deer able to hold washing in its antlers (Fig 29). A sudden movement and the presence of the evil witch scares the animals into escaping from the confines of human habitat back into their default forest lives. It is through this action that the audience can recognise that relationships are formed through the willingness of both parties to interact, and the non-human animals have an alternative life outside that of their contact with the main human character. Many main human protagonists in animation films have a single animal companion. These animal characters are often shown to have a particular sense or skill that gets their human companion out of trouble or helps their journey in some way. The first of these companion

relationships was created in the *Police Dog Series* (1914-16), already described, with Officer Piffle and his working dog Pinkerton Pup. We see a similar pairing in Wallace and his pet dog Gromit (devised and directed by Nick Park, Aardman Animations). Neither of these dogs has a human voice, but anthropomorphic qualities are shown through expressions and actions that seem to endow the dogs with more intelligence than their human counterparts. Other animal companions include Abu, who is Aladdin's pet Monkey and Meeko who is a friend to Pocahontas. It could be argued that what these type of characters are doing is simply reflecting our own human traits back to us. My argument is that, the animal nature of these anthropomorphic characters is shown through the particular attention to detail that animators create. Where companion animals are created retaining particularly highly developed characteristics, then further thoughts can reflect on the remarkable senses and skills that different animals are endowed with. This provides opportunity to highlight how different animal and human sensibilities come together to form a range of rewarding animal/human partnerships.

On reflection then, these charming, entertaining, imaginative animation films become important ways that both children and adults can think through their attitudes to many forms of living creatures with which they share this planet.

4.3.3 The animal gaze.

If 'the animal other' is based on considering the differences between humans and other animals; and using this to question modes of relationship between animal species, then 'the animal gaze' asks us to employ awareness for differences and similarities by putting ourselves in the place of different animals. Is it possible for us as humans to understand an alternative viewpoint and experience life through an unfamiliar pair of eyes? Animation, working as it does with multiple senses across movement and time, can provide a mix of imagination and believability that directs attention to a variety of perspectives. In this way animation that contains animal-led anthropomorphic characters in particular is able to portray a diversity of experience in a way that allows animators and

audiences to explore issues relating to lives of non-human animals. In the following section I suggest that it is through the aesthetic appreciation of the qualities of 'animal-led' anthropomorphic characters and the animal environments in which they operate, that opportunities for such engagement are made possible.

Popular animation feature films, such as those produced by Disney, Pixar and other major studios, tell of a journey that particular characters make through their lives; illustrating how they overcome threats, problems and disasters and mature into more rounded or better functioning members of their society. This is a simplistic description of plot and storyline, but it does clarify that, even though many animated films have animal characters and possibly an animal based storyline, the main focus of these films is still centred on human psychological and sociological issues. This is why popular animation films are criticised for projecting largely anthropocentric values, as animal representations (and by association the animals themselves) are seen as entertaining and humorous commodities for presenting human expectations, struggles and achievements (see discussion about anthropocentrism in Chapter 5.1). My interest in popular feature length animated films, then, lies with seemingly minor incidents and story fillers rather than the resolve of major dramatic storylines, because it is often through small animated vignettes that animators are able to reveal the animal nature of characters interacting with the environments they inhabit. Here there are opportunities for the audience to feel emotionally engaged from within the world portrayed, rather than looking in as spectators positioned on the outside. It is my argument that aesthetic visual qualities of the animation are important elements in eliciting these tacit and primary emotional responses (see Chapter 3.2 for more explanation of primary and pre-verbal human response).

4.3.4 Wild animals – animal characters in natural settings.

Returning to Disney animations and in the early film *Bambi* (1940/41) the commitment to depicting naturalistic animal form and movement in the main

characters of *Bambi* and his family is also followed through into highly detailed and beautifully rendered natural environments. Murray and Huemann (2011: 30) and Pike (2012: 56), suggest that phrases such as ‘the Bambi factor’ have come about because of the ‘over-sentimentalized’ and ‘romanticised’ depiction of nature. My view, however, is that there are moments in this film when the animators have portrayed the animals’ response to their environment with remarkably truthful aesthetic qualities: the fawn’s first encounter with snow and awkward skating on the frozen pond, the flight through the burning forest and the first sighting of the majestic stag. At these times an audience is able to participate in the experience with genuine emotions of delight, pleasure, fear and so on, and they are transported beyond the reality of their armchair or cinema viewing, bringing them closer to an animal perspective – an animal gaze.

By linking ‘animal-led’ anthropomorphic characters with natural environments in this way, animation films can stimulate debate around contemporary issues of environmental awareness, conservation and ecological concerns. From the recently published books by Murray and Heumann (2011), and Pike (2012), we have the concepts of ‘eco-toons’ and enviro-toons, which align animation with contemporary debates categorized as eco-criticism. Pike sees the animated ‘enviro-toon’ as an effective device for communicating environmental themes because ‘it often flies under the radar that detects “serious” art’ and can therefore promote a message ‘not by preaching but by sparking conversations about active strategies for change’ (Pike, 2012: 25).

It has been commented of animation films that have an environmental message that they can place humans in opposition to nature. Pike says such work ‘positions the human species as corrupt and careless’, presenting ‘a nature-versus-human story’ (Pike, 2012: 47). Murray and Heumann describe the storyline of *Bambi* as wanting to push the idea that humans are destructive and should be kept apart from nature (Murray and Heumann, 2011: 30). Here I raise the point that while many contemporary animation films seek to approach environmental topics in their scripts, for example *Ferngully* (Kroyer, 1992), *Finding Nemo* (Stanton, 2003) and *Happy Feet*, (Miller, 2006), it should be recognised that visual aesthetic elements in these films can be a particularly

effective resource for stimulating enquiry that brings an emotional involvement with nature to the fore. This connects to the work of the Deep Ecology Movement and writers such as Arne Naess, David Abraham and Kay Milton, who have wished to promote the sensual experience of nature and the need to cultivate 'sensitivity for qualities' (Naess, 1989: 51). Watching animation films cannot replace lived experiences in nature, but the emotions and connections they evoke through aesthetic enjoyment are seen to help foster 'an ideology of wonder and curiosity', bringing possibilities for developing an appreciation for the creatures and environments portrayed (Whitley, 2012: 137). Pike describes this kind of work as 'dialogic' (opening up avenues of discussion) rather than 'monologic' (presenting one narrow viewpoint). Concern for environmental themes is stimulated 'not by preaching but by sparking conversations about active strategies for change' (Pike, 2012: 25).

In *Disney and Nature*, Whitley highlights the 'lavish attention paid to sensuous detail by the animators, which he believes compares to the reverence shown by nature writers such as Muir and Thoreau (Whitley, 2012: 5). *Finding Nemo* (2003) is a strong example, with an ocean environment rendered in sumptuous detail. The fish characters have a high degree of realism in their form and the viewer is able to appreciate the movement of different types of bodies reacting to the underwater world. Compare this to the characters in *A Shark's Tale*, released in 2004, in which anatomical structures show more influence of human anthropomorphic elements and the sharp-witted script that parodies a human world of gangsters overwhelms any sense of exploring a distinctive watery setting (Fig 30).

By creating an imaginative interpretation of the 'animal-led' characters interacting with their environment, the animation aesthetic in *Finding Nemo* successfully allows viewers to feel immersed in a different perspective that creatures living under the sea may experience. Importantly, then, this type of animation can be seen as 'an emotional and aesthetic resource that may help draw the young towards the kinds of connection, understanding and debate that are vital if we are to come through our current environmental crisis and to learn from it' (Whitley, 2012: 161).



Fig 30. Comparing characters in *Finding Nemo* (Disney/Pixar, 2003) and *A Shark Tale* (Dreamworks, 2004).

4.3.5 Domestic and working animals - Animal characters in the city

We find 'animal-led' anthropomorphic characters in animated settings other than natural environments, such as when pets and working animals are being portrayed. Popular animated feature films often carry human focused sentimental or romanticized plot lines that are carried along with humorous incidents, but a sensitive audience can also find more serious issues reflected beyond the engaging entertainment. With this sort of evaluation, popular animation films set in built environments (towns and cities; domestic and working situations) that are enjoyable family entertainment on one level, may also act as stimulus for a deeper level of discussion.

Taking *Lady and the Tramp* as an example, and it is typical for reviewers to describe this film in human sociological terms: 'a classic romantic story of two individuals from different sides of the tracks'; 'this animated story taps into issues that will resonate with kids (like being neglected after a new baby arrives) and classic tropes (like love across class lines)'.⁶ The spoken dialogue coming out of animal characters' mouths and the typically Disney exaggerated designs

⁶ commonsense media: www.commonsemmedia.org/movie-reviews/lady-and-the-tramp

provide the anthropomorphic elements through which the human-like motivations are presented. But, these are 'animal-led' characters and each dog is rendered as a distinct breed with defining anatomy and characteristics individually portrayed - Lady is a delicate King Charles spaniel and the Tramp is a sprightly feral mongrel; other companions include a bloodhound and a Scottish terrier. They remain on 'all- fours', and actions are dog-like throughout (Fig 31).

The framing of the animation is taken from a low angle - the sort of viewpoint that dogs would have - and this pulls the audience into the perspective of the animated world through an 'animal gaze'.



Fig 31. *Lady and the Tramp* (Disney, 1955)

Particular scenes of note are when aggressive neighborhood dogs chase Lady and the extreme feeling of panic is animated to full effect, and when the Tramp attacks a rat, with the confusion of the fighting bodies creating chaos in the baby's bedroom. These are times when spoken language is absent, and the visual qualities become dominant factors in eliciting involvement and response from the audience that is sensual and emotional rather than cerebral.

The sorts of issues that can be identified throughout *Lady and the Tramp* include: ways in which we share our lives with pets shown through the relationship between Lady and her owners; attitudes to working animals who have lost

productivity, portrayed by Trusty the bloodhound who has lost his sense of smell; differences between domestic animals and those that have become feral, seen in the contrasting lives of Lady and Tramp; the problem of vermin animals that have learnt to thrive on the edge of human domesticity, witnessed in the dramatic scene when a rat enters the family home, and questions of responsibilities resulting from pet ownership, shown through the dogs' discussion of gaining a license and the tacit threats of the 'dog pound'. These are human created situations, which we therefore have a responsibility to address.

It is my argument that when 'animal-led' aesthetic qualities are portrayed in animated characters effectively, the feelings evoked at a primary or pre-verbal intensity will naturally motivate a questioning within young viewers and family audiences about human/animal relationships (see work on psychology of animal anthropomorphism in Chapter 3.2). While this may not lead to the sort of overt debate that comes through informed research language such as undertaken in Animal Studies, these unspoken attitudes may evolve within a wider public to become a significant sense of value and ethical responsibility. The international organization PETA (People for the Ethical Rights of Animals) suggests that 'Children trained to extend justice, kindness, and mercy to animals become more just, kind, and considerate in their relations to each other' which in turn will lead to 'more humane citizens'. One of the empathy building activities suggested on their website is to 'watch animal-friendly movies, such as *Chicken Run*, *Bambi*, *Lady and the Tramp*....'⁷ An understanding of how empathy with animal characters can be translated into an appreciation for the lives of real creatures is also reflected in the way that charities find animal characters useful to promote their causes and raise funds. Two examples are seen in Bernard the Gurnard, a mascot for the Wildlife Trusts' Marine Bill Campaign (Archeipelago 2007, 2011) and the character Pocoyo who had a diverse range of animal friends, used for the World Wildlife Fund's Earth Hour Initiative (Zinkia Entertainment, 2011, 2012)

⁷ Accessed at the online PETA site: <http://www.petakids.com/parents/teaching-compassion>

4.3.6 Animal advocacy.

Outside the framework of popular animated family entertainment, animation films have the possibility of making bolder political statements about both human and animal situations, because they are not required to carry a humorous layer of content. Rather, they are able to engage interest in audiences who seek out thought provoking narratives and characterizations, with anthropomorphic animals playing a part in the language of these challenging animated works.

Plague Dogs (Rosen, 1982), based on a novel by Richard Adams tells the story of two dogs, Rowf (a labrador-mix) and Snitter (a fox terrier) who have escaped from a research facility and evade capture for some days in the threatening environment of the moors and human habitats that surround the laboratory (Fig 32).

Snitter is suffering with a recurring head injury that evidences the brutal nature of the experiments he has undergone, which has left him suffering from fits and hallucinations. The tests of continual drowning and resuscitation that Rowf has endured have left him afraid of water, with a paranoid and fatalistic outlook. The dogs are outcast and hunted as possible carriers of the bubonic plague. This is animation for adults, and 'particularly challenges notions of animation and funny animal animations' (Wells, 2009: 193). The rendering relates to cartoon aesthetics, with graphic outlines part of a cell animation process, but the characters do not contain the typical Disney type exaggerated features for expressive and comic effect. Rather, a highly poignant and affecting film is created because of the detailed understanding of animal mannerisms and the uncompromising portrayal of violence and degradation.

When Rowf is shown out of breath in a tank of water we feel his exhaustion and desperation in his struggle to survive. When Snitter is welcomed by a hunter, but unintentionally causes the gun to fire into the man's face, we experience his confusion and humiliation as he slinks away from the scene.

Snitter and Rowf are anthropomorphic characters in that they are given human speech, but there are some interesting factors about the presentation of sound that helps to retain the integrity of the essential animal qualities. When

contained in an animal world, communication between the two dogs or other animals is through human speech, but the dialogue shows the animals to be lacking in experience and mistaking what is happening in a human dominated world. When humans are present, the dogs bark and whimper, giving an unmediated representation of their animal nature. Both of these ways of using sound portray the dogs' essentially primitive thoughts and reactions effectively, thus fully supporting the visual storytelling and helping to give some insight into an animal gaze on the world. Reviewer Loredana Loy describes *Plague Dogs* as a film that 'is exceptional in its unapologetic stance of siding with the animals and breaking away from the ubiquitous anthropocentric tropes.' (2013)



Fig 32. *Plague Dogs* (Rosen, 1982).

One Rat Short also comments on the abuses of vivisection. In this short film by Alex Weil (2006), we are presented with computer-generated rats showing a hyper-reality of fur and whiskers, which brings a life-like fleshy solidity to the animated creatures (Fig 33). The hostile laboratory setting is also vividly portrayed, highlighting the rats as vulnerable creatures in a severe, mechanical world – this makes for a very different relational response than when rats are felt to be debased, dirty vermin, as the audience is drawn into a conflict between machine and living entity, imprisonment and freedom. The story tells of a

subway living rat who, following a crisp packet, stumbles into a research laboratory. Love-at-first-site strikes, and the alley rat tries to free a female white rat, but the ending poignantly places their shared future out of reach.



Fig 33. *One Rat Short* (Weil, 2006).

There is no dialogue - the anthropomorphism of these rat characters is present because of the human-like consciousness that the main protagonists show relating to romantic love, altruism and loss of a loved one. These rats are not real creatures in a wildlife film, they are created super rats and the audience sees their fear and anguish in hyper-reality, beyond the possibility of real interaction with animals. This makes the cruelty imposed on the rats highly emotive for the audience to witness and brings an opportunity for understanding that human and non-human animals equally share states of pain and distress.

4.3.7 The possibilities that animation renderings present.

It is not pertinent at this point for me to review the whole discourse surrounding CGI and the representation of reality, which would be too large an undertaking and sidetrack the main focus of my thesis. However, it is of value here for me to comment on particular aesthetic qualities that CGI brings to the representation of 'animal-led' anthropomorphic characters and compare this to other forms of animation rendering.

The contemporary version of *The Jungle Book* (Favreau, 2016) also presents highly realistic CGI, but the animal characters are most obviously anthropomorphic in the fact that they talk. The animal nature of the characters is highly visceral and shown through some aggressive encounters and highly charged scenes that reinforce the vulnerability of a young boy amongst the animal physicality and some tender human/animal interactions that sees Mowgli's development within the family of jungle animals. The detailed rendering is technically highly accomplished and the integration of jungle panoramas, CGI animals and the real actor brings visual wonders to entrance the audience, that have been critically well received (Fig 34).



Fig 34. *The Jungle Book* (Favreau, 2016)

However, for me, there is an incongruity that left me feeling uncomfortable and this concerned the striving for reality for the animal characters, which did not fit with them talking – this created an uncanny valley conflict that stayed with me throughout the film. The CGI rendering was near to being fur texture, snakes' skin, tiger movements, but not quite, and this made me continually lose my engagement in the film. This, then, evidences how important the aesthetic qualities are in any animation, and that it is not a striving for absolute reality that creates successful 'animal-led' characters, but the ability of the rendering to create an atmosphere and a visual equivalent for animal aliveness. I am

reminded of the advice from Richard Williams, who has worked in animation for more than 50 years: 'What we want to achieve isn't realism, its *believability*' (Williams, 2002: 34).

In contrast to the hyper-reality of *One Rat Short* and *The Jungle Book*, *Biswas the Bull* (Moving Still, 1996), is an animated film that shows individual craft orientated rendering with an impressionistic drawing style (Fig 35).



Fig 35. *Biswas the Bull* (Moving Still Productions, 1996)

This, just as much as CGI work, can be described as a realistic representation of animal bodies and movement, not through showing every texture and detail or in creating a sculpted 3D effect, but because of the animators ability to capture a true essence of animals through precise marks and fleeting lines. Wells comments that in this type of work 'other things are privileged' (Wells, 2009: 4). The fluid drawings fade in and out, leaving gaps for the audience to fill in, creating a feeling of an animal world that is ephemeral – a fleeting glance of an animal life. The soundtrack is a voice-over giving a first person account of the bull's life experience; a journey watching other animals that will eventually secure his own identity as an Indian hump-backed bull.

This style of soundtrack, while providing an anthropomorphic element to the animal-led character, is less intrusive than the more overt use of talking animals. Mournful bellowing is able to express heartfelt emotion more effectively than

any explanation through dialogue could do and the sensual nature of sounds and images work together to keep the animal nature intact.

Two final short experimental films that I will now examine contain anthropomorphic hybrid creatures that are strikingly different from those already discussed, but that I wish to include as 'animal-led' anthropomorphic representations: *A Feather Tale* (Michele Cournoyer, 1992) and *Hominid* (Brian Andrews, 2011). These films are not about developing characters as such, but depend on the framing of a concept that the viewer can empathize with, which is a format that many independent animators take up. In both cases the hybrid figures are largely animal in design, but they have human heads or faces – in other words they are the exact opposite of the type of 'human-led' anthropomorphic characters that have human bodies and animal heads.

A Feather Tale recounts the late night meeting of lovers that becomes a demeaning event for the woman as she is stripped of her self-respect and identity. The movements of the woman-as-chicken are highly convincing (Fig 36).



Fig 36. *A Feather Tale* (Cournoyer, 1992).

With a delicate human face, the bobbing and scratching of an anxious hen creates an uncanny feeling for shared human and animal awareness. The scene is played

out as the man imprisons the bird and violently plucks her feathers. The flapping wings and ripping of feathers is extremely disturbing as the man holds down the vulnerable body and then releases a naked and humiliated form. The drawn rendering is sparse, created in flowing inked lines that capture movement, both the life of the distressed animal and the drawing process within the changing image.

Hominid is remarkable in its intensity of animal expression showing a frog, a bird, and a spider; all bearing human heads and depicted as x-ray, skeletal figures. The frog sits in anticipation as the bird drinks beside a pond and a spider looks on. Seeing all internal aspects of the animal structures is fascinating and mesmerizing. A dramatic chase erupts with the spider as hunter and the bird as prey –the spider’s legs and the bird’s wings giving specific movement characteristics to the chase. The bird is violently assaulted and brought down by the spider, which then carries the lifeless victim away.



Fig 37. *Hominid* (Andrews, 2011).

This is a hyper-reality rendering that has such a force of life about it that the viewer is drawn in for a closer examination of the intricate detailing and then transfixed by the power of the sudden outburst of movement (Fig 37).

In both of these films the underlying concept is one that returns to using animal imagery to present human concerns: *a Feather Tale* tells of the abuse that can become a part of a human intimate relationship and *Hominid* expresses extreme

relationships between dominant and submissive personalities represented as hunter and prey. Both show violent and shocking acts in a way that highlights the disturbing emotional effect but makes a representation more acceptable. The hybrid creatures have human heads, but they are animated as vividly animal moving bodies. These, then, are examples that show further possibilities for ways that 'animal-led' anthropomorphic creatures bring an expressive language to animation.

4.4 'Design-led' anthropomorphic characters

We now come to the last of my three categories, that of 'design-led' anthropomorphic characters. The defining aspect of these characters is that, whilst some animal and some human elements are present – thus supporting a relationship to anthropomorphism - the main focus of the designer/ animator has been to use his/her understanding of animation techniques to create a highly designed and invented form. In all anthropomorphic characters part of the process of formulation is to work creatively to integrate human and animal elements successfully, but in 'design-led' anthropomorphic characters, that creative invention, as it is evidenced in the aesthetics of the form, becomes *the* dominant factor driving the character design. The following section will briefly examine the history of these animation characters with a focus on highlighting examples of each stage of development, with a view to understanding how and why particular character elements evolved. References to the work of researchers such as Eisenstein, Powers, and Gunning, who have expanded specific theories of representation relating to film and moving image work, will help to give a context through which to examine audience response to these characters. Further discussion will identify the potential of using 'design-led' characters as an expressive anthropomorphic language for presenting ideas about animal life.

4.4.1 Early animation.

Chapter 4.2 of this thesis ('human-led' character designs) gives an account of the influence that working in graphic newspaper illustration and advertising had on

the first creators of animation during the early 20th century. For the preliminary 'design-led' animation characters the predominant forming influence can be traced to vaudeville theatrical performances. Klein makes the point that '(A)at the top of the cartoon industry, virtually every producer and distributor from the twenties into the thirties had worked in vaudeville in some capacity.....' (Klein, 1993: 21), with an obvious correspondence that the early cartoons had the same timeframe as the vaudeville acts – both lasting around seven minutes. With a major influence coming from live entertainment, these short animations used comic characters in short-form gags, slapstick humour and song and dance sequences, rather than building on dramatic or motivational plotlines.

Gags provide small units of action that do not require sustained concentration on the part of the audience members or the retention of narrative information over a long duration of time. Instead, gags bombard audiences with aural and visual information intended to sustain laughter (Furniss, 1998: 97).

Returning to the *Police Dog* series created by Carl Anderson for the Bray Studios (1914-18), I initially looked at this as an example of a programme that employed 'animal-led' character, and, over the years of its production, the form of the dog transformed into a 'design-led' character. Most notably, the animal took on an upright stance, but rather than becoming more human in anatomy, the body had an unstructured overall appearance, relating more to the amorphous form of a soft toy or one clothed in a baby-grow (Fig 24). This was the first of many similar animal characters that populated the short animation films through the 1920s and 30s, as the production companies looked to develop their own successful, cartoon protagonist. *Felix the Cat*, (1919) devised by Otto Mesmer for the Pat Sullivan Studios, was the most commercially successful, and encouraged other studios to develop their own 'hero' characters (Wells, 2009: 36). Here Felix provides an example through which to examine 'design-led' characteristics (Fig 38).

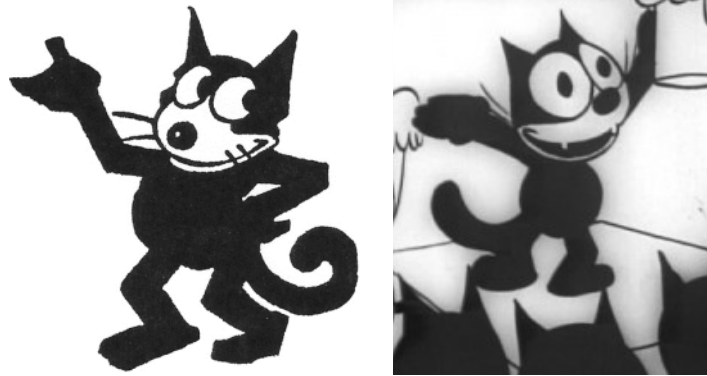


Fig 38. Several versions of the Felix the Cat design appeared between 1919 and 1930

Felix the Cat first appeared in 1919 in a series of shorts created for the Pat Sullivan Studios. It is disputed whether the originator was Pat Sullivan (who had drawn several cat characters such as Thomas Kat), or Otto Messmer, who certainly undertook a large amount of animation character drawing work for the Sullivan Studio. The difference that Felix the Cat brought to the gag filled range of animated shorts was that the character was no longer simply a cat getting into amusing scrapes – the anthropomorphic characterization defined a more knowing presence from within the character; a comic attitude depicted in graphic form. Pike describes Felix as a ‘cat/ideogram’ – although presenting mostly as visual metaphor rather than realistic representation, it does retain something of its origins and thus embodies memory shared by audience and creator (Pike, 2002:39). ‘An ideogram suggests realities using the barest of lines, requiring a viewer to fill in the blanks with information that’s personally relevant’ (Pike, 2002: 39). Klein suggests that the early animation characters were ‘stripped down for motion and easy readability’ (Klein, 1993: 5). Translated into a moving image, Felix became a ‘walking thinking animal’ endowed with possibilities of ‘representational flux’, as the use of graphic animation techniques allowed manipulation of form and space, morphing of one shape into another and a disregard for physical laws of time and gravity (Wells, 2009: 36).

The 1928 film *Felix the Cat in Arabiantics* (Sullivan, 1928) shows Felix picking a palm tree from the landscape horizon and using it as a brush on a rotund man’s stomach. On being pushed from a high balcony, Felix’s body breaks into many pieces as it hits the floor, only to return to his usual form in the next few frames

(Fig 39). From these examples we can see that the environment of each Felix cartoon is not simply a backdrop for character action, but is fully part of a surreal animated world in which landscape features may become functional props, static objects take on a lively movement, and body parts turn into useful objects. The pared down rendering gives a simplicity and unity, but a possibility of surprise comes with every drawn line, every animated action. Pike suggests that these early animated cartoons can be viewed as *dialogic* texts 'which invite engagement and demand a response, however messy and non-linear that might be' (Pike, 2002). This aligns with Cubitt's idea of 'vector animation', which is formed from rendering that is 'projective' and encourages a 'lets-see-what-happens' attitude (Cubitt in Buchan, 2013: 102). These short animations, then, are open to audience interpretation and rather than presenting a set narrative exemplify anarchy and chaos - a mutable graphic image of unpredictability, invention and possibility.

Powers gives Felix the Cat the label of 'anthropomorph' and describes such characters as liminal, a term made popular by cultural anthropologist Victor Turner and used in many disciplines to describe 'a thing or an entity whose essence is process, transformation, or becoming (Turner (1977) in Powers 2012). Liminality is evidenced through:

the ambiguity of figure and ground, the transformations of morphing and shape-shifting, the plasmatic and protean possibilities of the line, the interplay of cross-modal metaphor and metonymy, the reflexive interaction between animator and animated, and the myriad possibilities for playful transformation (Powers 2012: 30-31).

Further to this, Powers suggests the term 'ludic' as an appropriate critical framework for analysing media and film outputs. Similarly, Pike suggests that Felix is reprising the role of disruptive monster or clown' (Pike, 2002: 43), and Lindvall and Melton relate comic silent cartoons to Bakhtin's model of the subversive carnival (Lindvall and Melton 1994, in Furniss, 2009: 63). All of these ideas link characters such as Felix the Cat with a power to provoke mirth and

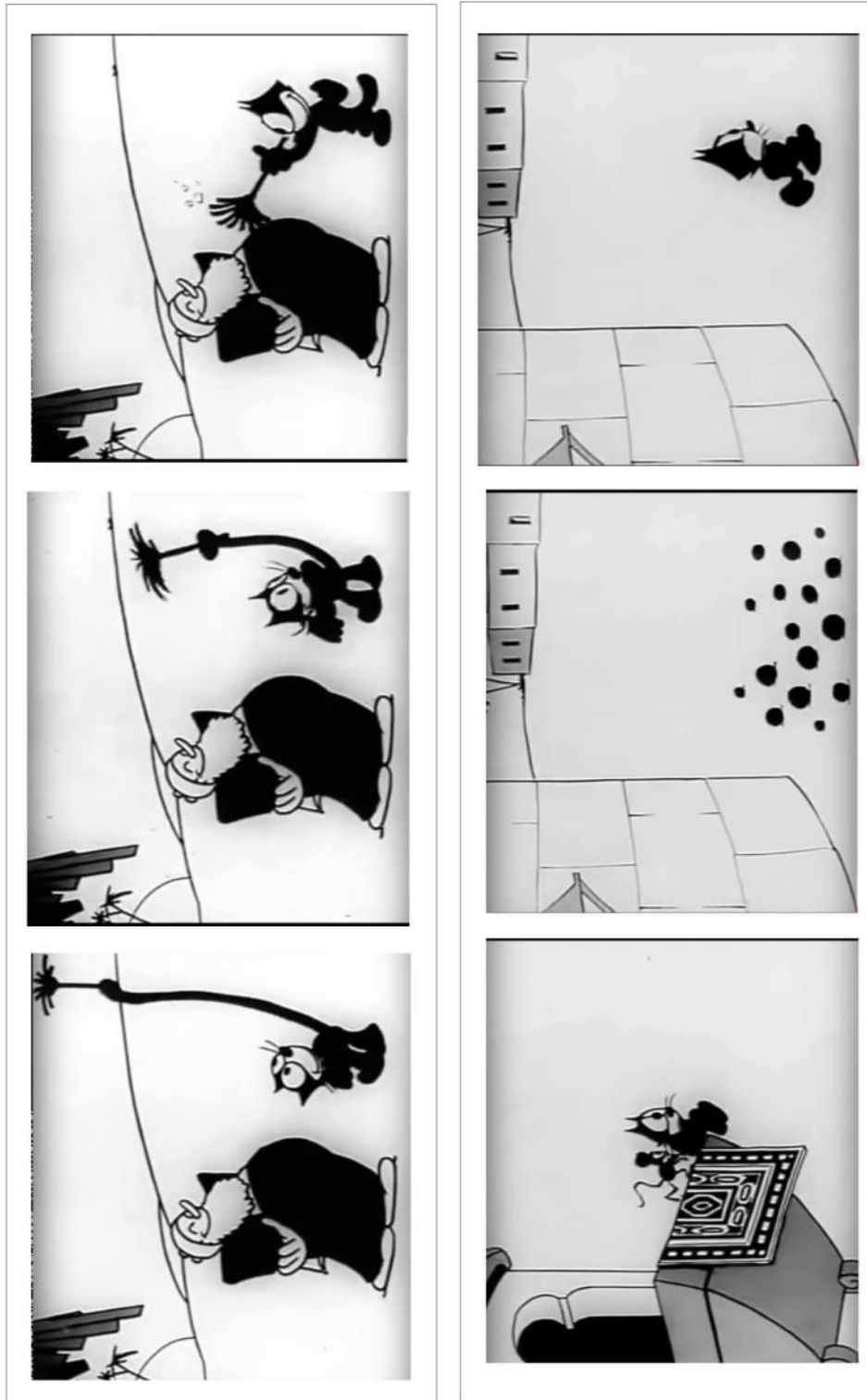


Fig 39. Felix the Cat in *Arabiantics*. (Sullivan 1928).

laughter, enticing an audience into a sensory engagement at a primary and preverbal level. This moves 'design-led' anthropomorphic characters beyond the literal portrayal of a fantasy animal, human or hybrid creature to the representation of shared human/animal dynamic energy, a vital 'liveliness', and an abstracted 'aliveness'. Examples of similar characters include Bimbo the Dog for the Fleischer Studios (1930)(Fig 40) and Flip the Frog for MGM (1930)(Fig 41).



Fig 40. Three versions of Bimbo 1930-1933 (Fleischer Studios)

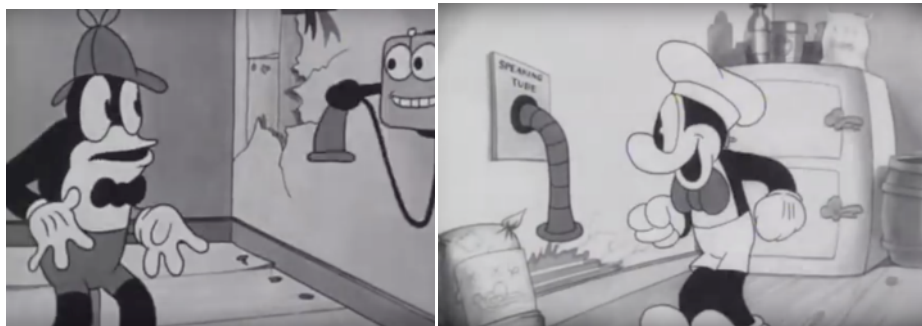


Fig 41. Changing versions of Flip the Frog 1930-33 (MGM).

Mickey Mouse, created by Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks as a replacement for Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, (1928) rivalled Felix the Cat in popularity. It is the early versions of Mickey Mouse that are of particular interest here as examples of design-led anthropomorphism, and *Steamboat Willie* (1928) was the first to incorporate a successful use of synchronized sound. Again, the character bodies are not seen to be fixed as in later works, but are able to morph out of shape and snap back again with ease. Body parts and landscape objects become interchangeable as useful and functional props to enhance the comic and rhythmic antics of Mickey and his companions (Fig 42).

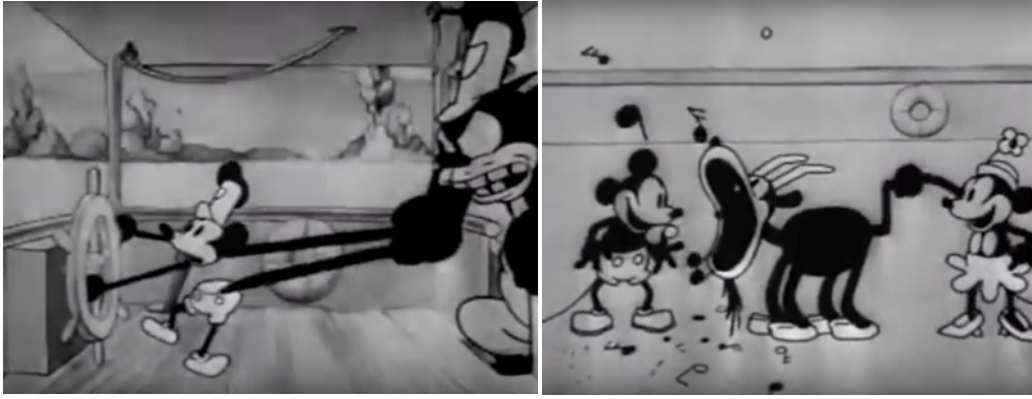


Fig 42. *Steamboat Willie* (Disney, 1928)

Powers identifies the playful use of sound to be an important signifier of ‘ludic’ animation: ‘this zany and exaggerated use of sound appears relatively rare in more realistic animation’ (Powers, 2012: 25). But it is Eisenstein (most readily linked to a critique of the early Disney style of animation), who writes how a union between dynamic graphic imagery and sound, has the ability to create ‘polysemantic flowing meaning’. The experiences of the viewer or indeed the mood of an audience at the time of viewing could bring different interpretations to the work (Leyda, 1986: 46). Sound that has no relationship to the reality of specific animal or human figurative form is here shown to find a better fit with these ‘design-led’ anthropomorphic characters, echoing the diversity of ideas and emotions that the images may present.

Music has preserved this emotional plurality of meaning in its speech, the plurality of meaning which has been displaced from language that seeks precision, distinctness, and logical exhaustion.....to convey not a precise conception, but a complex of feelings accompanying it (Leyda, 1986: 27).

In early animated works of the Disney Studios, Eisenstein found what he called a “plasmaticness” in the rendering of drawn characters, each seen as a creature:

which behaves like the primal protoplasm, not yet possessing a “stable” form, but capable of assuming any form and which, skipping along the rungs of the evolutionary ladder, attaches itself to any and all forms of animal existence (Leyda, 1986: 21).

The relationship of these 'design-led' characters to the portrayal of animal and human lives is perhaps less apparent than 'animal-led' or 'human-led' anthropomorphic characters, because the rendering of their bodies is less clearly defined as a realistically animal or human form. What is important, however, is to see the ways in which the 'design-led' anthropomorphic attitude to representation allows transforming and evolving qualities to appear, which can connect to philosophies of 'becoming' and of species interconnection (see work on philosophy in Chapter 3.3 for more on this). In *The Animated Bestiary* (2009) Wells calls all animated animal characters 'phenomenon' and states that 'the primal knowledge that properly aligns humans and animals' is revealed through intrinsic properties of animation work. This he relates to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'becoming animal' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980), and acknowledges Haraway's notion of 'in-the-making' by restating it as 'animal-in-the-making' (Wells, 2009:18). My argument here is that it is 'design-led' anthropomorphic characters that particularly bring a strong alignment with these ideas because, while still working with the figurative, they connect to 'animal' through abstract and sensual aesthetic qualities. As less emphasis is put on representing realistic forms of animals (for example, less accurate knowledge of anatomy and structure, less attention to detailing of realistic textures and colouring), a process of designing and animating that is less mediated and more instinctive can result. Animators can therefore direct their work in ways that promote metaphysical engagement with an essence of animal life, both for themselves in their working process and for the viewing audience.

4.4.2 Development of character 'personalities'.

Towards the end of the 1930s The Disney Studios became more interested in honing a representational style that gave the animated characters' bodies a believable appearance, working with emotive gestures and dramatic plotlines, particularly extending into feature length films. Other studios worked on animated series of short films, with a progressive change in pace so that 'the chase' replaced 'the gag' as the basic driver of motivation and action. Notable pairings included Wiley E Coyote and the Roadrunner, and Sylvester and Tweety

(cat and bird), both for Warner Brothers, and Tom and Jerry (cat and mouse) for MGM (Fig 43).



Fig 43. Notable animated character pairs.

The difference between these and earlier animated character forms was that, following the example of the Disney Studios, production pipelines used model sheets so that characters were faithfully copied, creating an ultimate stability of form and ‘ending the restless morphology that previously accompanied a given character’s passage through the hands of different artists and directors’ (Stabile and Harrison, 2003:5). There was still a type of surrealism in these films, but this was based on the characters changing shape during aggressive and violent interactions rather than an animated inter-relation of character, props and environment – the process of cell animation kept characters and backgrounds apart. This, then, was where any humour was largely activated, between the continual tension of the competing enemies and the anarchic acts of violence that left one or other outrageously transformed, until a break in scene and tempo transformed everything back to a status quo.

It is possible to view these ‘design-led’ characters as having very little if any of their animalness remaining because of the exaggerated and invented character forms. But another way of thinking about this is that what is being represented is concentrated animalness - the animators understanding of animal structure and movement, and their abilities to use the animated medium is condensed into highly charged and ‘fit-for-purpose figurative ideas. Gunning labels this type of film work ‘The Cinema of Attraction’, that is ‘tapping into a source of energy’ and ‘subjecting the viewer to sensual and psychological impact’ (Gunning, 1986: 66). The viewer is attracted, not by getting caught up in a fictional world with elaborate dramatic development; engagement is through an excitement of fear and curiosity and the thrill of short bursts of ‘scopic pleasure.’ Only a short delay

is possible between the setting up and release of tension, 'a cinema of instants', rather than of developed dramatic involvement (Gunning, 1986: 66). Thus we see in the Road Runner cartoons (Warner Brothers) the importance of the held shot, as Wile E. Coyote looks down to realise the explosive arrow he should have fired is still in his hands and about to explode. The fall of the coyote over the edge of the cliff is given exaggerated drama by seeing his first position in the empty sky, followed by a shot of the distance he is about to fall, and the retention of a hand left at the top of the fall in order to prolong the ordeal. The speed of the chase is drawn using speed lines and blurred cycles of movement instead of a full Road Runner image. These are all devices that became well worked out forms of comic timing to play out the tensions between competing character pairs (Fig 44).

There was also an emergence of single animated animal stars who were recognisably 'everyman' characters portraying, for example, the wise cracking and trickster optimist, the bedraggled and put-upon pessimist, the anxious and angry hot-head. Characters would be seen in a range of scenarios relating them to the social history of their times. Using animal character forms is a way of representing the universal rather than the personal and these design-led animated forms in particular make it possible for viewers to see overarching personality types invested in the total appearance, gestures and actions of characters. 'Design-led' anthropomorphic characters of this type include Bugs Bunny, Pepe le Pew, Mickey Mouse, Daffy Duck, the Pink Panther and later versions of Felix the Cat (Fig 45).



Fig 45. Animated character 'star' personalities.

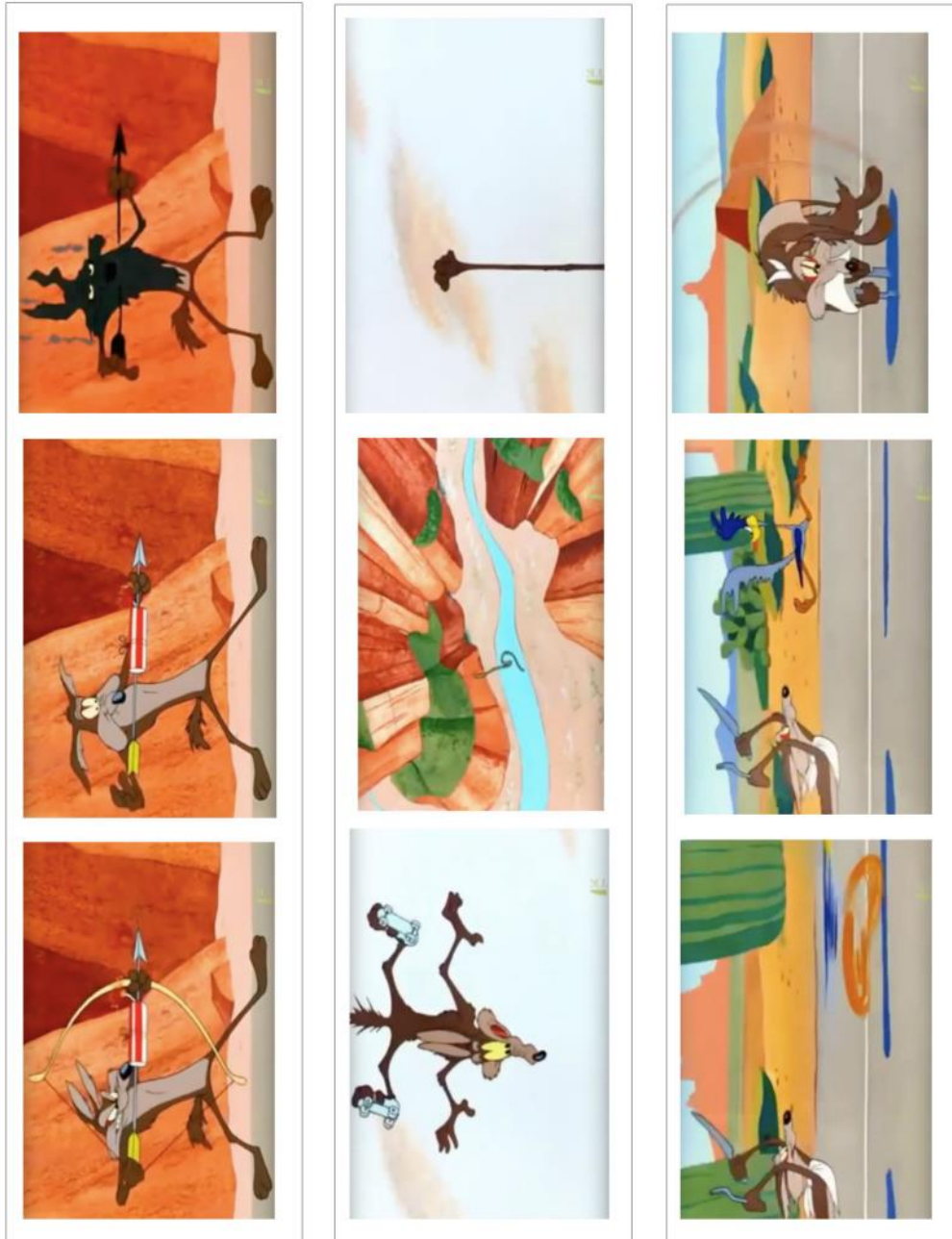


Fig 44. Wile E. Coyote and *The Road Runner* Cartoons created by Chuck Jones

These were drawn to have movement that fitted the exaggerated taxonomy of each invented character, while still having the plausibility of movement that such a creature would make if it were alive. The characters' bodies retained the same skeletal structure, but the objects and habitat around them would sometimes take on fantastical aspects that added elements of surprise and amusement, for example, Felix the cat had a bag of tricks and Bugs Bunny would create holes to pop into.

4.4.3 Television animation.

In 1948 The Paramount Decision meant that cinemas no longer wanted to show animations alongside main live action films and the animation companies lost the ready market for their short films. This boosted the move into television, with Hanna Barbera becoming the key production house for television animation in 1957 (Hilton- Morrow and McMahan in Stabile and Harrison, 2003: 75). Budgets for television shows were much smaller and because of economic necessity a form of 'limited animation' that speeded up production was developed. Influences on the new minimalist styling came from United Productions of America (UPA) who worked with a modernist art aesthetic and the Zagreb School, who worked with a politicized social attitude. Wells lists features of limited animation to include 'no complex choreography, repeated cycles of movement, a small repertoire of expressions and gestures, stress on dialogue, basic design, and simple graphic forms' (Wells in Stabile and Harrison, 2003: 17). Wells suggests that this change to a 'reduced' mode of rendering does not have to be seen as a detrimental step, but rather, it 'created a new aesthetic for animation which foregrounded its versatility and variety...' (Wells in Stabile and Harrison, 2003: 19).

This gave a new styling to 'design-led' anthropomorphic characters, starting with Ruff and Ready, Huckleberry Hound and Quickdraw McGraw and moving on to Yogi Bear, Top Cat and many others (Fig 46). The humour was carried along in the soundtrack rather than the action and often it was only facial features and an occasional limb that moved. Each character's appearance had to fit well with

expressive and comic voices. The new, cost effective rendering used strong graphic outlines and shapes, reminiscent of the pre-Disney era, but with hard, straight lines augmented with blocks of colour, rather than a fluid, organic drawing style (Wells in Stabile and Harrison, 2003: 19).



Fig 46. Animated characters created for the limited animation of television productions.

Characters moved stiffly like cut out shapes and a feeling for ‘liveliness’ can no longer be attributed. It is then legitimate to question the purpose of this type of anthropomorphic character design in particular, as researchers from Critical Animal Studies have done (see Chapter 3.3 for more on this), and whether these comic characters are most culpable of making the contribution of any animal element ‘invisible’, ‘drained of any significance’ and ‘trivial’ (Baker, 2001: 8). Also relevant to this period of television history (through the 1960s and 70s) is that the quality of animation has been questioned, with a move of all animation work to children’s Saturday morning viewing slots (Wells, and Hilton-Morrow and McMahan in Stabile and Harrison, 2003). In much the same way that Wells sees the cartoon output of this era as keeping animation alive during a difficult time for many production companies (Wells in Stabile and Harrison, 2003: 26). I believe that the design led anthropomorphic characters, remembered as animals, are recalled with affection by a generation of viewers. As one of that generation, I would therefore acknowledge the merit this work has in bringing a comfortable familiarity to thoughts that align animal nature and creativity.

During the 1980s and 90s a ‘new era’ of television animation developed which was based on ‘prime time’ family viewing (Wells and Farley in Stabile and Harrison, 2003). Farley critiques the notion of ‘double-coding’, which suggests

that successful works have a first layer of immediate amusement for children (aligned with relatively unsophisticated visuals) and a second satirical layer for adults (aligned with more sophisticated verbal jokes in the sound track). She suggests that television animation of this period, such as *Ren and Stimpy* and *The Simpsons*, is attractive to both children and adults because it contains ‘a high degree of disruptive play’ (Farley in Stabile and Harrison, 2003: 148). This returns to theories of ‘the carnival’ (Bahktin) and ‘the ludic’ (Powers, 2012), which Farley expands on by highlighting the ‘intrinsic levelling quality of fun’ that enables these animated works to provide ‘shared pleasure’ to family audiences (Farley in Stabile and Harrison, 2003:61).

4.4.4 Relating animality to inhumanity.

In *The Ren and Stimpy Show* created by John Kricfalusi for Nickelodeon (1991-96), Farley finds a ‘disruptive’ play that is always on the edge of bad taste (Farley, in Stabile and Harrison, 2003:158). Ren, a psychotic dog and Stimpy, a good-natured but stupid cat, are shown as crude and gruesome figures whose bodies contort and deform with exaggerated outpourings of emotion, aggression and violence. This brings a ‘design-led’ anthropomorphic form that is deliberately ‘transgressive’ in opposition to more familiar rounded and cute animation characters (Farley, in Stabile and Harrison, 2003: 157). Caldwell cites this to represent a ‘trash aesthetic’, which he describes as ‘unfinished look, noisy soundtrack, emphasis on physicality and superficiality, eclectic audio-visual clutter’ (Caldwell, 1995: 97) (Fig 47).

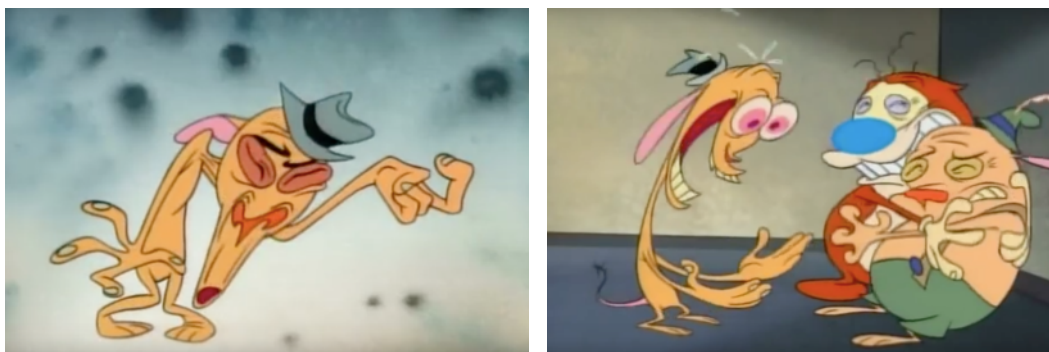


Fig 47. *The Ren and Stimpy Show*, ‘I am so angry’. Episode 19: Season 2 (Kricfalusi, 1992)

In a section entitled 'I am so angry' (from Episode 19, Season 2, 1992) Ren comes home to find the place in a mess and Stimpy is 'hanging out' with his friends. The dog goes into a paroxysm of anger, shown by the exaggerated distortions of his contorting body, the tension building as his, at first, mild voice is making an obvious effort to contain the aggression to come. This type of slow build up to frenzied action is typical of the show, with the use of delayed and disjointed sound effects adding to the incongruity.

These are extreme 'design-led' characters in that there is very little relationship to animal or human references left in the figures. They have a 'limited animation' aesthetic for usual movement, but are able to morph into completely outrageous shapes expressing emotional responses. An animal nature is shown through aggressive and violent behaviour – an endless presentation of 'bodily efluvia' and 'private moments' (Farley in Stabile and Harrison, 2003: 158). Wells finds a similar relationship to 'uninhibited animal' in Geoff Dunbar's *Ubu Roi* (1979) where base instincts, shown as 'embedded appetites and desires', represent the connection between humans and their innate animal-ness (Wells in Lawrence and McMahon, 2015: 102) (Fig 48). By taking on aggression and degradation as prominent modes of action, these animations are creating a highly controversial aligning between animality and inhumanity - pushing boundaries of representation and attracting audiences by doing so.



Fig 48. *Ubu Roi* (Dunbar, 1979)

There is, however, an inherent problem with this type of disruptive and sensational output in that the need to go further to shock and excite with each episode becomes an addictive progression for both creator and viewer. What it is possible to grasp from these examples at a practical level is that incongruity of

form, movement and sound can operate as a modern aesthetic for animated characters, and while some designers/animators will want to work with extremes, 'design-led' anthropomorphic forms offer a broad range of opportunities for unconventional or individually inventive animation work.

4.4.5 Contemporary independent animation.

Wells makes the point that in studio animation production it was not practical for the types of character animation that depended on repeat drawing of mutable character forms to survive (Wells, 2002a: 25). To close this section I will examine work from two independent animators in which traces of an early aesthetic can be perceived that relied on transformative forms of animation movement such as metamorphosis, fluctuation and disintegration – lines oscillate and distort, shapes shift and evolve; forms emerge and dissolve. Klein describes these aspects, re-emerging in contemporary animation, as 'hesitations', 'lapses' and 'glitches' (Klein in Gehman and Reinke, 2005: 30-32). Gunning discusses their importance to technically modern forms of animation as a way 'to convey not a precise conception, but a complex of feelings accompanying it.' (Gunning in Buchan, 2013: 56) The 'design-led' characters in the following short animations are of a nature not previously discussed in that they are subsumed into an overarching concept narrative that is the driving force of content - what Buchan calls a 'narrative space' that engages 'at a primary level of aesthetic expression before the secondary level of story' (Buchan, 2006: 86). Each designer/ animator has undergone an individual exploration of textural and materials based properties of animation: Alison Schulnick uses plasticine and Selina Wagner uses charcoal and ink drawings.

Alison Schulnick uses plasticine in a way that fulfils the malleable qualities of the material. Most stop-motion animators struggle with the fact that plasticine will go out of shape and distort the modelled characters in the process of filming, but Schulnick continually transforms and remodels figures in a fluid transmography of evolving creatures. In *Mound* (2011), the mutability of the plasticine brings memories of the material, used as a child, when finding all the colours had mixed

into an indefinable lump. Schulnick takes this unpromising material to a surprising depth of emotional resonance, layering white over black and textile lace over smooth modelling clay to give subtle tones of colour and texture. The overall movement is of transformation rather than the movement of bodies in space; eyes and hands emerge and disintegrate, the living qualities of breathing creatures revealed and then reabsorbed.



Fig 49. *Mound* (Alison Schulnick, 2011).

There is a grotesque layer of curiosity due to the apparent crude level of modelling skills, but the unusual lack of refinement is appropriate for this work creating a link to 'the ludic' and 'the carnivalesque' (Powers, 2012) and to a 'trash aesthetic' (Caldwell, 1995), with undefined animal and human elements continually amalgamating. This is a music video, so that sensory engagement comes through the visuals and the sound, providing a successful example of how emotional intensity can be the premise for movement through animation work.

Selina Wagner brings a contemporary feel to a process of drawn animation using charcoal and ink rendering with a subtle layering of imagery. In *Crow Moon* (2006), there is the suggestion of a dramatic narrative with tensions of conflict and danger presented, but the actual story is open for interpretation. A single bird character is pitted against forces of wind and fire and an aggressive attack

from a flock of birds. With the help of a larger bird mentor he seeks solace in the light of the moon and stars. My interest in this work is in the rhythms and patterns of the graphic imagery – bird wings change into abstracted patterns of fire. The anthropomorphic bird forms are continually extended or elaborated, according to the type of movement and degree of menace required. Wagner manages to create a sense of depth by multiple layering of ink and charcoal images that move from being sharp, black graphics to misty, grey shadows, with the bright white of the sun turning in to a beacon of light as the moon cuts through the darkness of the night sky. Again, the patterns of the images are matched to musical rhythms, this time in a soundtrack that is sparse, with dramatic effects matching points of tension and flight.



Fig 50. *Crow Moon* (Selina Wagner, 2006).

In both of these works, *Mound* (Schulnick, 2011) and *Crow Moon* (Wagner, 2006), the 'design-led' anthropomorphic figures have an affinity with the animation materials and processes used, so that experimental animation techniques have enabled the creator to express a high degree of emotional content and the audience to engage with the work through sensory qualities. These reflections on the animation achieved by others helps me to see the possibilities for moving my own animation practice away from character and narrative as the main driver for anthropomorphic representations and to explore more experimental

areas of design that makes use of abstracted patterns and rhythms for moving image work.

4.5 Conclusion

The following points sum up the contribution added by this section of theoretical research and indicate the influence it has made on the developing practice:

- By using a theoretical approach based on aesthetic qualities found in ‘human-led’, ‘animal-led’ and ‘design-led’ characters, developed through the process of this research, I have moved away from the usual forms of analysis that are based on human social and ideological references. This has provided an answer to the concern that anthropomorphism carries an ‘anthropocentric bias’.
- Here an approach that uses aesthetic and sensual responses to the visual qualities of character design gives a different way of discussing anthropomorphic characters. This gives a lead in to practical work that will also present ideas using a perspective of inter-connected species.
- The importance of early animation using ‘design-led’ characters has become relevant, with the graphic qualities that promote aliveness of living creatures and the rhythms and patterns of the visual imagery and sound becoming aspects to pursue in practical work, rather than animation techniques that promote animal forms through hyper-reality and indexicality. Aspects of abstraction and morphing can build a link to a contemporary expression of anthropomorphism through the materiality of experimental animation techniques.

5 Establishing a New Paradigm of Practice

5.1 Introduction.

In this chapter I am going to reflect on the knowledge gained from the research documented in Chapters 3 and 4 and then move into an auto-ethnographic documentation of the new practical work. Here, influences will be identified that have come from the theoretical study of a wider context for anthropomorphism (written up in Chapter 3) and the reflection on the use of anthropomorphism in animation (written up in Chapter 4). A working process will then be explained, that takes my practical work from the earlier character based animation described in Chapter 2, to my most recent explorations using experimental forms of animation, so that the knowledge gained through the practice itself is also accounted for. The combination of reflection on theory and documentation of practice evidences the integrated form of action research methodology identified in the 'Introduction' chapter. Because of the particular approach shown through the reflection on my own practice, the reflection on anthropomorphism in animation, and reflection on anthropomorphism in a wider context, it has been possible to move into new practical work in animation that answers the main research question: 'how might a redefining of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representation bring a new impetus to the use of animal imagery within contemporary animation practice?'

5.2 Reflecting on the theoretical research.

The following is a brief summary of important points that were uncovered through the theoretical research, which answered research questions and also enabled a move forward into new practical work.

5.2.1 Anthropocentrism.

In animal and human sciences and in philosophy, anthropocentrism is the idea that humans are the most significant entity in a hierarchy of living beings, and in any comparison between humans and other animal, human capacities are taken

to be the defining and dominant point of reference. Modern criticism of this hierarchal approach proposes that anthropocentrism has prevented us from seeing and understanding the real place of animals in the world. This has been represented in a history of ideas initially seeing the animal as 'the other' in a way that suggests negative and oppositional relationships. Humans are placed outside the animal world, as the observer looking in. Modern Animal Studies discourse recommends that framing 'the animal other' is a way of examining both the differences and similarities between humans and other animals and between animal species – humans being one type of animal species. Weil is typical in recommending that it is no longer adequate to represent the non-human world by placing ourselves outside it and ideas about human exceptionalism need to be redressed by 'insisting on the intimate entanglement of the human in the material and animal world' (Weil, 2012:147).

Similarly, in a history of using animal imagery in art and media, anthropocentrism is levelled as a criticism of creative work that makes animals seem as if they have the same lives as humans (with family relationships, human type emotions and motivation for example) and work that uses animal images as symbolic or humorous devices. In both of these cases it is not the animal itself that is being portrayed, but animal elements are used to express human concerns and represent human experience. This, then, links with creative work that is employing anthropomorphism as a visual language, including animation in which animal characters are substitute humans or largely portraying human sensibilities and motivations in the guise of an animal. For me, the question of anthropocentrism in this work became a problem that needed to be addressed.

Pike talks about animations, including those with animal characters, as being dialogic texts and Wells sees the 'animated animal' as a 'phenomena' able to carry a multiplicity of meanings. For Baker, post-modern creative work often takes conventions and turns them back onto themselves, with clothed animals 'sometimes offering valuable opportunities to destabilize anthropocentric meanings....' (Baker, 2001: xxxi). All three are suggesting it is possible to take a broad approach to thinking about the use of anthropomorphism, in effect allowing a range of ideas to surface that highlight a variety of relationships

between humans and animals. This is redefining what might be seen and understood in animation work for contemporary audiences, but my comment is that much of the animation itself still depends on employing animals as universal symbolic references in the same manner that has travelled down to us from Aesop, creating his fables in 600BC. The narrative content is focused on moral and social lessons for how *humans* should live in the world and this is even so when contemporary issues surrounding animal welfare and ecological problems become a central theme, such as in *Finding Nemo* (Stanon, 2003), *FernGully* (Kroyer, 1992) and the recently released *Zootropolis* (Howard and Moore, 2016). My way of addressing the problem of anthropocentric bias is to seek out ways of using animation that would give equal weight to the human and animal presence within anthropomorphic relationships.

Lawrence and McMahon (2015: 9) recognise that cinema has 'anti-anthropocentric potential' when moving image makes use of 'its capacities for expanding the horizons of human perception. On re-examining the definitions of anthropomorphism and zoomorphism, that make use of the words 'form of animals' and 'characteristics of humans', it is understandable why these terms have predominantly become associated with character and hybrid figures within narrative animation. In my practice I took the view that it is possible to understand 'form' and 'characteristics' as fragmented elements and stylized/abstracted representations and this step allowed me to move away from dominant character and story based work and to look for possibilities of combining forms, textures, colours, details and movements coming from a diversity of living creatures and simply thinking about the potential for inspiring curiosity, fascination and a sense of wonder.

I began exploring ways of working with animal and human imagery that depend on the perceptual, lyrical and sensual rather than the conceptual, dramatic, and symbolic. The combined moving imagery that then developed through experimental forms of animation I saw as anthropomorphic, but using the word to describe the gestalt of the animated film – anthropomorphic animation – rather than being used to single out the characters within a narrative film. Here I reference the work of Naess on Gestalt ontology and Anderson and Chen on 'the

relational self' (see Chapter 3.3). Further to this, having found the word 'zooanthropomorphic' being used to describe Palaeolithic sculptures and illuminated letters in medieval manuscripts, I now take this word in preference to 'anthropomorphic' or 'zoomorphic', because it amalgamates the words derived from Greek that mean animal (zōion), man (anthropos) and shape or form (morphe), therefore reflecting a relationship rather than a separation. I now call the work 'zooanthropomorphic animation'. This is where my approach to answering the research question 'is it possible to approach creative work using anthropomorphism in ways that do not promote a strongly anthropocentric bias?' began.

5.2.2 Primal and pre-verbal responses.

From research into psychological understanding of animal representations, (including the work of Winnicott and Case), I first gained an understanding for primal and preverbal forms of response to animals in reality, toy animals and imaginative representations of animal and anthropomorphic creatures. Different ways of knowing animals were presented that depended on empathetic and emotional connections rather than through identification and classification that is the basis of natural history type scientific learning and cultural symbolic understandings. Early religions also had a connection to animals through the arousal of deep emotional and spiritual feelings rather than through conceptual and intellectual knowledge and anthropomorphic images were created as expressive forms of these responses.

The breakdown of character design that I made in Chapter 4 was an important factor in seeing the aesthetic qualities of different types of anthropomorphism. It would seem a straightforward step to align the characters that have the greatest evidence of animal anatomy and animal movement ('animal-led' characters), with the most significant way of representing a reality of animal qualities and therefore the strongest shift away from anthropocentrism. I realized that by reflecting on this research, I no longer felt this to be so. Indeed, I now believe it is the 'design-led' characters that carry a very real embodiment of animal essence through the portrayal of creaturely liveliness and animal vitality.

Both Wells and Powers talk about the 'liminal' states of animation bringing possibilities for revealing animals and humans (Wells in Laurence and McMahon, 2015:106; Powers, 2012: 30-31) and Eisenstein promotes a "plasmaticness" of fluid forms for representing animal existence. This links with modern philosophical thinking, such as that of Deleuze and Guattari, that sees life as a continual evolvment of 'becoming', rather than a rooted state of 'being'. What it is possible, then to express in moving images, is a depth of sensual and emotional *response* to experiences of what animals are, which is different to creating naturalistic representations of animals. The fluidity of animated renderings is the perfect medium for creating these responses and relationships and this was a more useful way for me to proceed into new practical work.

Much of the animation work that I have documented in this thesis so far relies predominantly on a cognitive approach for devising anthropomorphic characters and narratives. Especially in popular animation forms, it is the unfolding of a dramatic script that leads the film: textual communication takes precedence over visual and perceptual possibilities. The artwork has been mediated through cognitive literary forms and storytelling devices and it is the aesthetic appreciation of these tropes that moves the audience through the film. In looking to find new ways of thinking about anthropomorphic representations in animation, moving away from the dominance of cognitive schemes and allowing the non-cognitive to come forward more strongly, would seem to offer potential for exploring different and original treatments. This has led me to different ways of seeing animals that are not through the usual socially or ideologically mediated agendas but are directed by an aesthetic appreciation of nature (including animals). Both the Ambient Mode (Foster in Carlson and Berleant, 2004) and the Arousal Mode (Carroll in Carlson and Berleant, 2004) of aesthetic appreciation recounted in Chapter 3 are relevant to this way of thinking. Foster's lead in particular, which gives importance to types of response that are outside a narrative norm, echoes my own wish to investigate the potential of a sensual visual language that is not dependent on dramatic script.

Although situated in Environmental Aesthetics and describing responses to actual experience in nature, I could see the potential of working with this type of

response through visual and auditory explorations created in animation. If a dramatic narrative script is no longer seen as the backbone for animation film work, then more lyrical and sensory experiences of nature, and responses to nature, can be used as the driving force for creative work promoting 'a feeling of being surrounded by, or infused with, an enveloping, engaging tactility....' (Foster in Carlson and Berleant, 2004: 205).

5.2.3 Developing an ecological approach.

Understanding discourses in animal sciences such as ethology, raised the idea of 'critical anthropomorphism', first defined by Burghardt, in which placing the animal in context is an important step. Animal/human relationships are seen as active social partnerships between animals and humans in the context of shared environments. This leads into ecological thinking that is part of modern day anthropology and philosophy, seen for example in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, Tim Ingold and Donna Haraway, which has a common factor in seeing humans, animals and environments as interconnected and interdependent. Relationships are described as 'entanglements', 'rhizomes' and 'meshes'. Phenomenological experience in nature is the prerequisite for understanding engagement on a sensual and emotional level. From these influences, I began to see actual experience in nature as a starting point for practical work, so that recording my responses or actual encounters with living creatures was a movement into new creative work. The importance of phenomenological experiences is also something that I wanted to move through the working process, so that each stage could be seen as a progression of 'becoming'. I was looking for a working process that would transfer the immediacy of experiencing the natural environment into the absorbed flow of the working environment, and then on to an engaged viewing in the screening environment. This connects to 'a third state of being' as expounded by Langer (1969) and Winnicott (1971), and a sense of 'flow' as described by Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990).

From the theoretical research input I had understood approaches to practical working that, through 'zooanthropomorphic animation', gave me a different

perspective on the use of anthropomorphism as a visual language and enabled contemporary ecological content to develop. I then needed to find techniques and processes through practical working that would embody these ideas.

5.3 Reflecting on practice – moving into experimental animation

In 2000 I was given a grant from S4C (the Welsh Channel 4) under their 'Short-shorts Scheme' to make a one-minute film. It was an open brief with no prescribed subject matter or intentions for outcomes. The scheme was set up to allow a wide range of creative people connected to animation in many differing ways to have some time and support to experiment with the medium. The ethos was that by spending small amounts of seed funding that allowed media creatives a freedom to explore, individual and original work may emerge that could be developed successfully into more commercial products for S4C. There was a showing of completed work at the Cardiff Animation Festival and it was contracted that S4C could use appropriate films as a filler between programmes for 3 years. In this way, a range of people, employed in different aspects of animation production, were given valuable support to develop connections in animation, and there was no high-pressured expectations to succeed beyond this.

Working as a model-maker in the animation industry, this grant provided me with a way to incorporate animation into my own creative practice that was largely sculpture and drawing. I was already working through a project that had come out of a residency at the Rubicon Dance Centre (undertaken with support from the Welsh Arts Council 1998), particularly using imagery based on hybrid forms that combined details of animal markings with fragmented human hands. (Fig 51). These ideas readily transferred into moving image and I made a short film called *Childs' Play*, inspired by children's hand games such as clapping songs and shadow puppets. The sound track also used simple children's shaking and banging instruments and hand tapping and clapping rhythms.

Although it was necessary to enter a proposal including a synopsis and some storyboarding in order to gain the grant, this was much more about showing possibilities rather than describing a pre-defined outcome. I therefore felt a freedom to use drawing and digital techniques in a heuristic, 'making and responding' process, able to react to developing ideas as they emerged and changed during the course of the production. I worked creating both the images and sound intuitively, with only a minimal amount of technical support when difficulties arose and therefore felt fully in control at every step of the production. This felt like a creatively satisfying way of working for me that enabled me to push ideas further than I could have imagined at the outset. It was shown at several international festivals as part of a Welsh compilation and therefore was also successful under the terms of the S4C scheme. (Fig 52 and 53).

In 2001 I gained a second grant from S4C with a proposal for a film called *In the Garden*. In this second year, S4C wanted to see a larger percentage of the seed funding leading to commercially viable productions and the process of overseeing these awards was more organized and determined along animation industry lines. Proposals had to include full storyboards showing strictly defined narrative content and production techniques, with the emphasis that the script was the essential driver for success. I dropped ideas of further developing the *Childs' Play* theme in favour of a figurative, stop motion film, that had a 'human-led anthropomorphic wildebeest as a main character, and a narrative based on a humorous gag with moral undertones. This was the type of work I was used to seeing and working on through employment at Aardman Animations and everything could be pre-planned, fully worked out and agreed upon through character design sheets, storyboard and script.



Fig 51. Drawings and sculptural work based on hands (Gill Bliss 1998 – 2010)

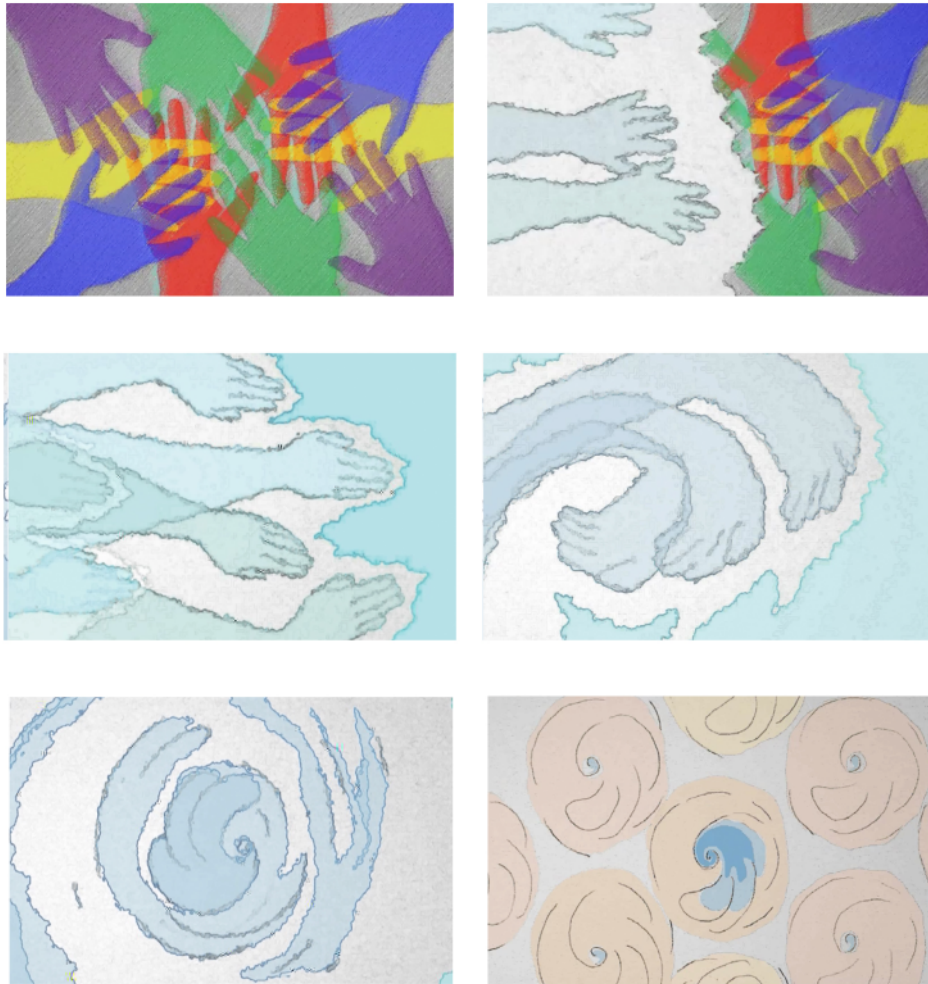


Fig 52. Screen shots from *Childs' Play* (Gill Bliss 2000).

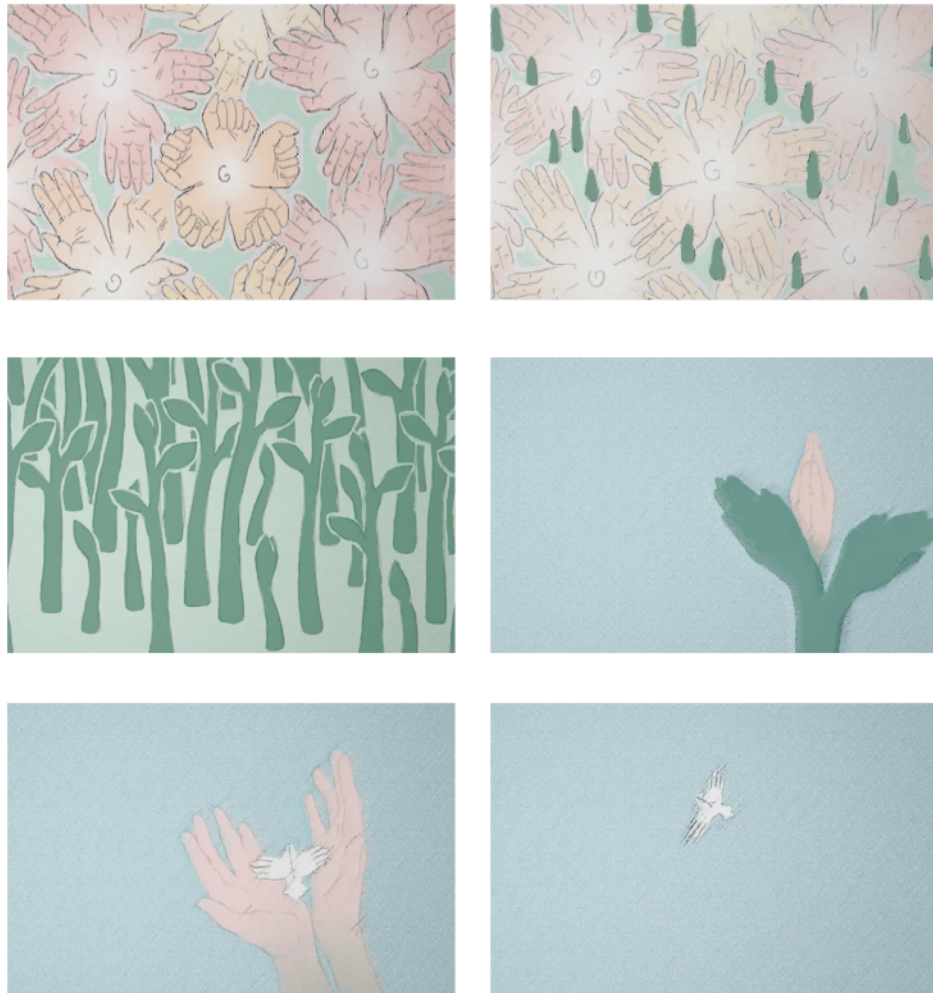


Fig 53. Screen shots from *Childs' Play* (Gill Bliss 2000).

I worked with a small technical team and a production house for final editing of the film including compositing of a soundtrack. The overall shift in approach gave little leeway to change things once they had been set up, and I needed to plan ahead to organize the appropriate work for others in the team. Working in this way, there were several occasions when I felt dissatisfied with the job done and although it was a reasonable example of an animation including anthropomorphic characterisation, I did not feel the finished short film reflected my individual outlook in the same way that *Child' Play* had done.

My own creative ideas and employment in the animation industry continued for over ten years with similar character based work, but embarking on this PhD research enabled me to return to the explorations that began in *Childs' Play* and reflect on pertinent elements of the working practice which I found highly

intuitive and creative. This has provided important connections between the theoretical research summed up in Chapter 5.2 that directed a movement towards non-anthropocentric and aesthetically interpreted imagery, and the animation practice for which the development of a contemporary 'zooanthropomorphic' visual language was crucial. The following are the most important points coming out of this reflection:

a. Experiential working process.

Thinking about my working process for *Childs' Play*, once a clear theme was defined, a range of ideas for imagery were gathered that presented hands as design elements in moving patterns and rhythms. These movement sequences were then drawn with a continual reflection and adjustment that involved seeing what developed and reacting to emerging accomplishments, problems and happy accidents: drawings that showed finer detail were simplified to become better design elements and the order of sequences and transitions started to take shape. The drawings were scanned into 'Photoshop' to be coloured and manipulated digitally with the process of reacting and amending continuing through this stage: an initial use of bright primary colours needed a more subtle touch and changes brought about by digital rendering offered possibilities for material qualities such as water. Lastly the sequences of drawings were downloaded into 'Premiere' for further editing of movement and compositing with the soundtrack: a gathering of individual basic sounds were combined into rhythms through a similar process of trial and error to find an effective fit with the changing pattern of images.

Although every step produced surprises, this was not a process 'out of control' but one in which there was a confidence that skills and former experiences of techniques, materials and creative invention would produce results. Images of greater clarity supplanted the preliminary visual trials, and early movement sequences developed better rhythmic shape. The outcome achieved could not have been anticipated through more rigorous pre-production planning. Suzanne Buchan documents a similar working practice in the Quay Brothers who will only work as a partnership of closely aligned twins:

‘As for what is called the scenario: at most we have only a limited musical sense of its trajectory, and we tend to be permanently open to vast uncertainties, mistakes, disorientations, as though lying in wait to trap the slightest fugitive “encounter” (Buchan, 1998: 7).

This then is testament to an experiential mode of practice that McNiff describes as ‘artistic knowing’: ‘the truly distinguishing feature of creative discovery is the embrace of the unknown’ (McNiff, 1998:15). Dewey, who first developed theories in experiential learning, recounts that the artist does not want to eliminate the tensions of difficult practical problems. ‘He rather cultivates them, not for their own sake but for their potentialities...’ (Dewey, 1933:14). It was an important point in this research project for me to realise that I wanted to rely less on the typical pre-production/production/ post-production animation planning. This was a further move away from traditional character and narrative animation that I have described as ‘human-led’ and ‘animal-led’ anthropomorphic characterization in Chapter 4. Elements described as ‘design-led’ anthropomorphic work now provided more relevant links, particularly thinking about the ‘liveliness’ of rendered outlines and the flatness of the screen space and also ideas about a ‘ludic’ approach that finds attraction in rhythms and patterns of colour and movement.

b. Experimental animation techniques.

In the short film *Childs’ Play* the animation framing does not make a separation of objects and background, but instead, creates design elements that interact and transform freely within fluid compositions. There is a continual interchange between the surface flatness of the screen showing blocks of colour and texture, and other references to three-dimensionality of fragmented forms. A visual language of the metonym and synecdoche suggests ideas that might trigger viewers’ own memories and references to individual experiences. Potato counting hands become waves, become flowering petals, and back to hands that enclose a bird. A shooting growth of leaves brings traced outlines of hands and a shadow puppet bird flies with finger-spread wings. Sean Cubitt describes a similar interplay of shape and form, depth and surface as being important to

both early graphic animation and contemporary work using digital vector imagery:

Thus the gestural styles of Klee or Jackson Pollock pay no more heed to the figure-ground relation than does Cohl's morphing line, and the sweep and gestural style of craft animators like Ryan Larkin similarly morph particular lines between the two functions, or leave them wholly ambiguous (Cubitt in Buchan, 2013: 103).

In *Understanding Animation* (1998) Wells gives an account of experimental animation work that includes the following attributions: abstraction and a resistance to the expression of character; the prioritisation of illogical, irrational or multiple continuities; a bias towards the non-narrative or different forms of narrative; a concentration on the very materiality of the film; combinations and mixes of style and a strong relationship to rhythms and musicality. He also states that 'these films are largely personal, subjective, original responses, which are the work of individual artists seeking to use the form in an innovative way' (Wells, 1998:45). Following these descriptions, *Childs' Play* can be readily situated as an experimental animation film. Whilst there is limited anthropomorphic imagery in this film, related ideas in sculpture and drawing developed more animal content. I do therefore believe that reflecting on this film was a vital step in allowing me to find new ways of understanding anthropomorphism as descriptive of the gestalt of an animation film and thus the move into experimental animation sensibilities for the new 'zooanthropomorphic' work.

5.4 Knowing through practice – new work.

5.4.1 Experience in nature.

In *Picturing the Beast*, Steve Baker talks about the need to explore strategies 'that might have a chance to modify human perceptions of the nonhuman animal and to increase awareness of living animals' circumstances' (Baker, 2001). My aim was to take actual experience with animals as the starting point for new practical work that would represent living beings sharing a place and time. My access to

animal life was going to be limited, but in a way that was the point because this is true for most people in Western societies. I was looking to make a simple and truthful response to what I came across, a response to 'the over-determination of the animal image' (Burt, 2002: 12).

Thinking of my possibilities and the garden, the park, the zoo, the aquarium, the countryside, the estuary, the sea all came to mind. Some of these are more organized as man-made environments, but all could offer opportunities: the ordinary circumstances of moving through habitats with other creatures, or special occasions bringing interactions with unusual species. I now had some useful ideas that described ways of relating to animals: interconnections and interminglings; entanglements and emplacements; meshes, nets and rhizomes; multiple worlds and animal traces.

It was a period when my grandson lived a few streets away from Bristol Zoo, and I had bought a season ticket for our many days out. It is a place of happy memories for me – seeing a sense of wonder in the eyes of a young child and curiosity aroused. This made it an obvious site for initial explorations, with the zoo inhabitants and environment providing inspiration for new work. To have chosen the zoo as a site for creative work brings with it controversy, with particular criticism raised within Animal Studies discourse. Berger led the field in saying that to gaze at animals in the zoo, 'you are looking at something that has been rendered absolutely marginal; and all the concentration you can muster will never be enough to centralize it' (Berger, 1980: 22).

There is a similar critical attitude directed at finding pleasure in the aesthetic qualities of animals, which suggests that it is a superficial way of contemplating their presence and further examples promote extreme assumptions that all human/animal relations are seen as wrongful and detrimental to animals – 'sentimental or hollow or a disconcerting combination of the two' (Burt, 2002:25). I have experienced similar attitudes at Animal Studies conferences, the most severe of which seemed to prefer showing images of an empty space in preference to any representation of an animal. My stance is to place an importance in opportunities that we are able to share with all living creatures,

for example when at the zoo: looking to discover the range of diverse species in a purposeful way, and feeling delight and intensity at such encounters. In this I find support from Lawrence and McMahon who write that interactions at the zoo 'can open into a different mode of relation, one marked by attention and consideration' (Lawrence and McMahon, 2015: 8). By acknowledging the actual interactions that people can have with many different creatures, and to see 'looking at' as a form of 'witnessing', changes the animal from being a passive model into an essential agent for connectedness. This is a way of turning away from negativity and acknowledging the place that all living beings share in modern society. 'Ultimately, whatever the inner states might be, it is the visible interactions between the surfaces of the animal and human body that determine the nature of the relationship' (Burt, 2002: 69).

A priority for me was not to think ahead, but to experience fully at each stage of the process. This first gathering of information, of experiences, was to be without any pre-conceived orientation. Petitmengin writes about this as 'pre-reflective experience' - this stage of experience largely goes unnoticed, before our reasoning and 'what we know' takes over and 'we lose contact with the immediate visual sensation' (Petitmengin 2009: 8). This was harder than it might seem - I had to battle with the urge to think about how the material might fit into an organized narrative, one thing linking to another; replacing this with finding an importance in immediate sensation - thinking about my grandson seeing these things for the first time.

I filmed everything and anything I could, letting the film record without particular direction, gathering what seemed to be a part of the experience: animals in view; environments; people; sounds. I wanted to be unobtrusive and to film the ordinariness and the specialness without interfering or disrupting the experience itself.

5.4.2 Experience in the studio. Stage 1:

Film gathered at the zoo became source material to be examined in the studio. Having filmed with no pre-conceived intent, I examined the film footage closely,

fully observing what was actually showing rather than only focusing on what I expected to see. Several ideas surfaced in the viewing that I had not been conscious of during the filming process. A large part of the footage was of birds and it became obvious that these were one of the most accessible creatures, certainly compared to the large mammals. Some were zoo inhabitants: gulls and penguins were in a large enclosure that the visitors could walk into and so be surrounded by noise and movements; flamingoes and pelicans were on ponds, more separate and seen from a distance. Other birds were visitors looking to make use of the zoo environment: crows, sparrows, robins and pigeons perched amongst the human visitors, having become familiar residents due to their wish to find food. (Fig 54 shows a range of birds captured on the filmed footage.) A second important impression that emerged was the variety of environments that had been recorded: hard and soft surface textures, the movement and qualities of water, shapes and colours of leaves. I realized such settings were going to play an important part in the intensity of any creative response that I made because of the contribution that the contrasting colours and textures could provide as overall expressive qualities.

The important focus was not the birds, people or objects as individual characters, but the opportunities for birds and people to share space and time experiences within the environments. Marks suggests that the 'intermingling of human and animal life' in 'co-existences', including the experiences provided through zoo interactions, creates possibilities 'not of identifying across a chasm but establishing communication along a continuum' (Marks, 2002: 39).

Petitmengen identified that: 'the more attention is detached from its absorption in objects to enter into contact with experience, the more reduced becomes the corresponding distinction between "exterior" and "interior"' (Petitmengen, 2009: 13). Understanding such approaches allowed me to see the expressive nature of the experiences as a focus, thus enabling a letting go of *figuration* as a driving force in the work.

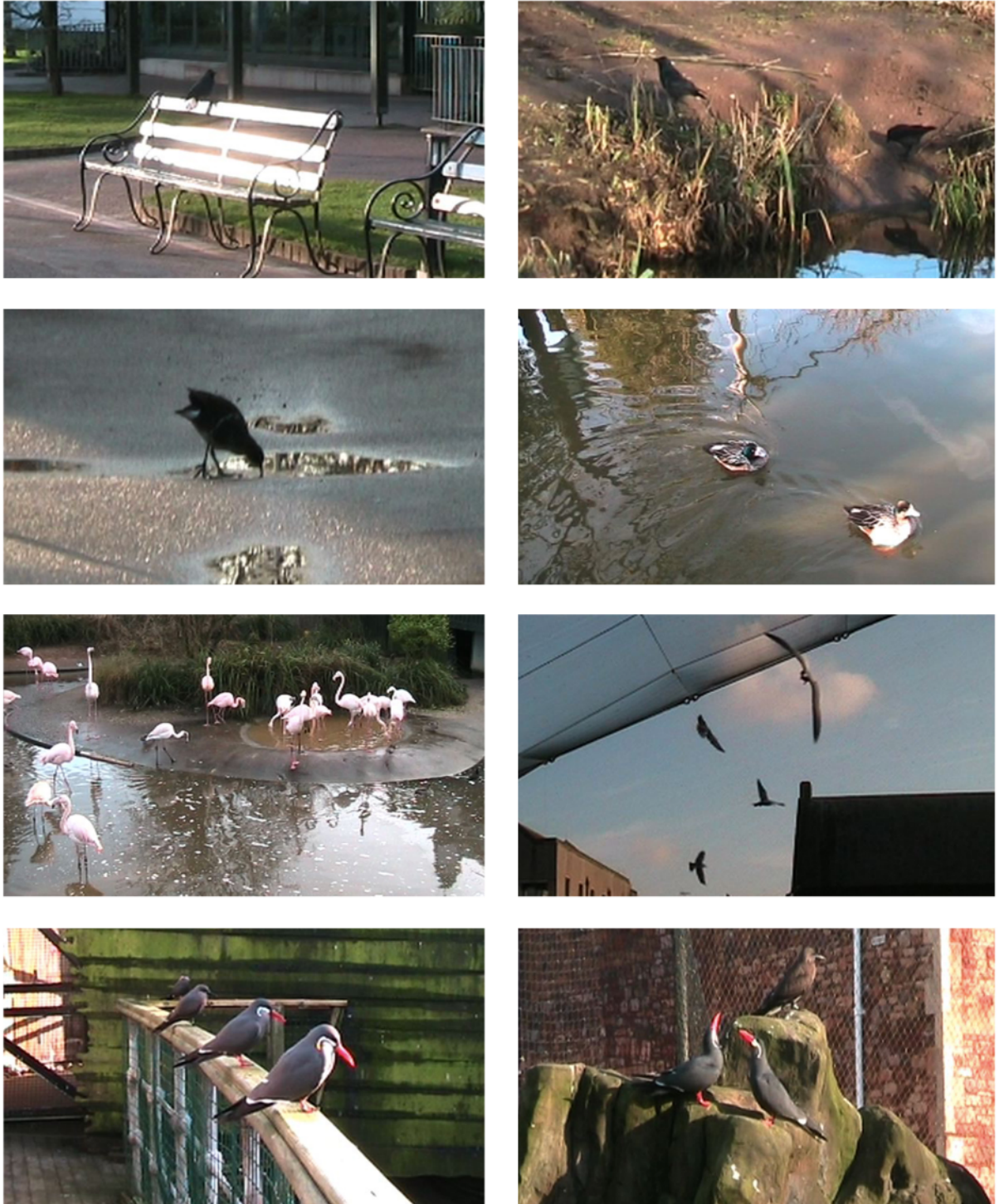


Fig 54. Screen shots taken from live action footage of zoo birds (Gill Bliss, 2013).

Although the live action filming was initially supposed to be just source material, I found the intrinsic highly detailed information to be vivid and exciting – this, then, was a good starting point for me to take on new ways of working. Instead of rendering all the objects and movements from scratch, as in, for example, a drawn animation, I took what was given in the film footage and began re-animating chosen sections with an aim to heighten aesthetic qualities that I found present. I considered that the resulting film-work was then a creative response to the experience at the zoo and not just a documenting of it.

For the first animation experiment I blended a section of film showing ducks on water and a section of film of my grandson, particularly showing delight on his face. I broke the film into individual frames and used digital processes to deconstruct and reconstruct, highlight and texture, fragment and layer; keeping the essence of the material intact, but creating new patterns and rhythms of composition and movement. These strategies provided the imaginative response element for new creative content.

I worked a similar process for the soundtrack, using the diegetic sound at the zoo: human voices, animal calls and incidental background noises: layering and manipulating digitally to create new rhythms and intensities.

At this stage I found research into the use of metaphor was particularly helpful, as a way of thinking about the practicalities of the working methods. Very little research has been done exploring the possibilities of *image* and metaphor - often images are illustrations of literary forms rather than being a truly visual communication of ideas. In *Metaphor and Film*, Wittock recounts hostility within literary circles towards describing images as metaphors, because as images are actually there they can only be taken literally and not figuratively (Wittock, 1990: 2). His own interpretation, that 'seeing metaphor or creating metaphor means perceiving interrelated patterns of meaning', opens up possibilities for thinking about metaphor in *visual* creative work (Wittock, 1990: 12).

I found useful connections with the following three forms of metaphor as Wittock described them: the montage (combining disparate elements into meaningful wholes), synecdoche (where a part replaces a whole) and metonymy

(fragmented forms and repetitions). For my purposes all of these suggested ways of building layered imagery from interpretive forms.

Lakoff and Turner developed a theory of metaphor (Cognitive Metaphor Theory) that situates the human body as the prime influence for many common forms of figurative language, so that description of emotions may have a connection to parts of the body, ways that the body moves and so on. This, then, makes strong links to embodiment, but, their explanation of mapping from a 'source domain' onto a 'target domain' (Lakoff and Turner, 1989: 103), would seem to bring us back to a duality of symbolic hierarchies: one element gaining and one element losing or disappearing. This is typically the form of symbolism or 'metaphorical displacement' (Burt, 2002: 17) found in character animation where animals are largely used to represent 'the human condition' - something that I was trying to move away from. The 'Blending Theory', later expounded by Fauconnier and Turner, allows for the creation of any number of 'input spaces' from which material can be drawn and a 'blended space' into which chosen material flows. Once material is fused in the 'blended space' it may be elaborated on, so there is the potential for emergence of new content, not available from either of the input spaces, but an imaginative response to it (Fauconnier and Turner, 2003). This then, presented a more useful framework for the explorations I wished to undertake - understanding the animal, human and environmental forms to be 'input' material and the final unity of fused imagery to be 'blended' zooanthropomorphic outcomes. (Fig 55 and 56).

See *Zoo Birds 1* viewed on the DVD or online at

<https://vimeo.com/user9679705/videos>)

Reflecting on the film work I realized that there were sections of this experiment that were successful in dispelling any figurative dominance, and the colour, texture and form of human, animal and environmental elements were blending together to create sensations of interconnected imagery. But, I had not completely let go of the driving force of narrative as intended, as I had allowed technical aspects of the filmmaking to become a different form of narrative instead. While this had formed a way of leading the viewer into and out of the

most abstracted section of imagery, I felt that the overall emotional intensity of the work had, in this way, been weakened. This, then was the most pressing thing for me address in further experimental work.



Fig 55. Screen shots of *Zoo Birds 1* (Gill Bliss, 2013).



Fig 56. Screen shots from *Zoo Birds 1* (Gill Bliss, 2013).

5.4.3 Experience in the studio - Stage 2:

My understanding of the developing practice to this point was that I had begun responding to *experience in nature* and was translating this into *experience in process*. This felt as if I was working from inside nature, and being part of a relationship of living beings, with the rendering of these 'zooanthropomorphic' images as a way of connecting. Moving into a second stage of experimental

practice and my aim was to find a way of giving more weight to sensual and embodied responses, using the visual elements of animals, humans and environments as open and expressive building blocks. Understanding this mode of approach to both the living creatures and the environment as elements present in the creative work was an important step that enabled me to move forward in allowing *sensation* rather than *figuration/characterization* or *narrative* to become the driving force in the work.

In recent years there has been a movement in film theory to highlight the emotional and bodily responses involved in making and viewing moving image work. In her seminal book of 2009 Grodal placed an importance on 'embodiment': '(T)hus film viewing may be a biopsychological simulation in a very direct sense, and involve levels far below language and consciousness' (Grodal, 2009:13). Marks has broadened this area of study with the introduction of 'the haptic' as a way of understanding 'a multitude of sense experience' which is able to 'bring the image closer to the body and the other senses' (Marks, 2000: 152). Donaldson has extensively analyzed texture of film, highlighting different ways that 'audiovisual media evokes and renders touch', particularly building relationships to a range of art forms that is helpful when extending these ideas to animation practice (Donaldson, 2014: p4). All of this discourse promotes exploring visuality in conjunction with other senses, particularly hearing and touch, in order for us to reach a fully empathic and bodily experience of moving image/film. I am making a further link between enlisting aesthetic sensations as 'embodied' and 'haptic' responses to moving image work, and the sorts of feelings for ecological connectedness that are possible when sharing experiences with other living creatures (see Chapter 3).

Marks (furthering ideas from the art historian Riegl) describes 'haptic visuality' as perceiving and exploring the material qualities that are moving across the surface of the screen. This is in contrast to 'optical visuality', which works with the perspective depth of an image, separating the identifiable and important objects from their background and also separating the viewer as 'an all-perceiving subject' – this is the sort of 'ocularcentric' viewing that has been most prominent in Western cultures (Marks, 2000: 162). 'Haptic visuality', by

breaking down the subjectivity between, for example object and ground, viewer and viewed, animal and human, creates an understanding where all are seen as contributors to a more ethical filmic experience, thus preserving 'both the 'physicality and the unknowability of the other'(Marks, 2002: xviii). This is a form of visuality that aligns with my ideas for a 'zooanthropomorphic' (rather than anthropocentric) animation working practice.

The second stage of experimental trials used three sections of film in which I found prominent colours, textures, movements and sounds evidencing very different experiences of the interactions with the birds. Walking into the gulls' large enclosure, one was immediately struck by the red and green intensity of noise, smell, and close flapping wings. What was more pronounced in the film footage was the backdrop of wire netting that kept both humans and birds contained in the raucous experience (Fig 57).



Fig 57. Gulls. Still from live action footage of zoo birds (Gill Bliss, 2013).

In contrast, the duck ponds revealed ducks swimming calmly and serenely, the sound of blue flowing water adding to the peaceful setting. The film footage picked out visual interest of ripples and reflections in the water (Fig 58).

The third extract was viewing of flamingoes. An immediate impression was the exotic nature of these birds, their long spindly legs and awkwardly heavy bills.

They moved in a graceful chorus, flowing one way and another, with rising and falling of incongruous honking cries. The film evidence highlighted delicate trceries of feathers and bones, set against equally slender and windblown bamboo stalks; reflections in water forming a mesh of pink and green lace (Fig 59).



Fig 58. Ducks. Still from live action footage of zoo birds (Gill Bliss, 2013).



Fig 59. Flamingoes. Still from live action footage of zoo birds (Gill Bliss, 2013).

This time I used my own face to provide a human element to be layered and 'blended' with the imagery of birds and environments. I retained the photographic nature of all the imagery, but was now more attuned to explore the abstract aesthetic qualities present; the work was to reflect and highlight different sensations experienced in the three settings through the building of patterns and rhythms. Pearlman underlines how the act of editing rhythm has the potential to encourage or disrupt engagement with a piece of film, believing it to emphasize 'embodied, psychological, temporal and energetic *participation* in the movement of images, emotions and events' (Pearlman in Donaldson, 2014: 72). I relate the creative re-animating work I was doing to the comparison that Donaldson makes between the 'texture' of film and other art forms such as weaving of cloth or musical composition:

The sense of textuality as a layering of influences and echoes of references and experiences creates an impression of thickness, that a text gains richness through multiple layers, and of density, as the reading process packs many layers together (Donaldson, 2014: 31).

I undertook a good deal of experimenting, until something fascinating and captivating started to emerge for each section. Not every combination would work and there was certainly a need for judgment in what elements would define a successful effect. I was not looking for particular events to provide vivid focal points, but was seeking out combinations of imagery in which the intricacies of patterns and rhythms evolved through subtle sequences so that the resulting experimental pieces were presenting an immersive experience of sensation rather than relying on dramatic narrative for their direction (Fig 60 and 61). See *Zoo Birds 2,3 and 4* on the DVD or viewed online at <https://vimeo.com/user9679705/videos>

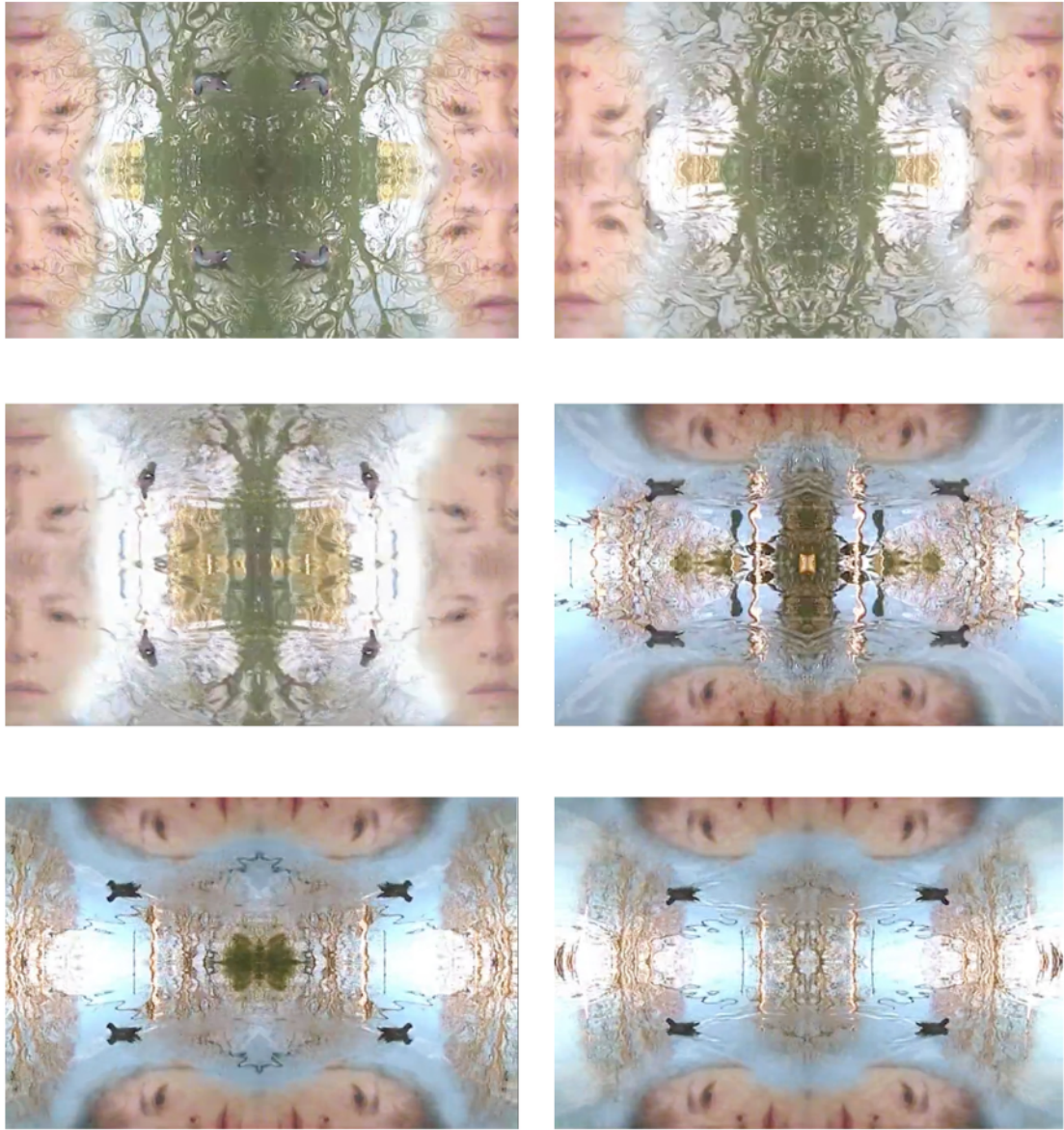


Fig 60. Screen shots from *Zoo Birds 2* (Gill Bliss, 2013-14)

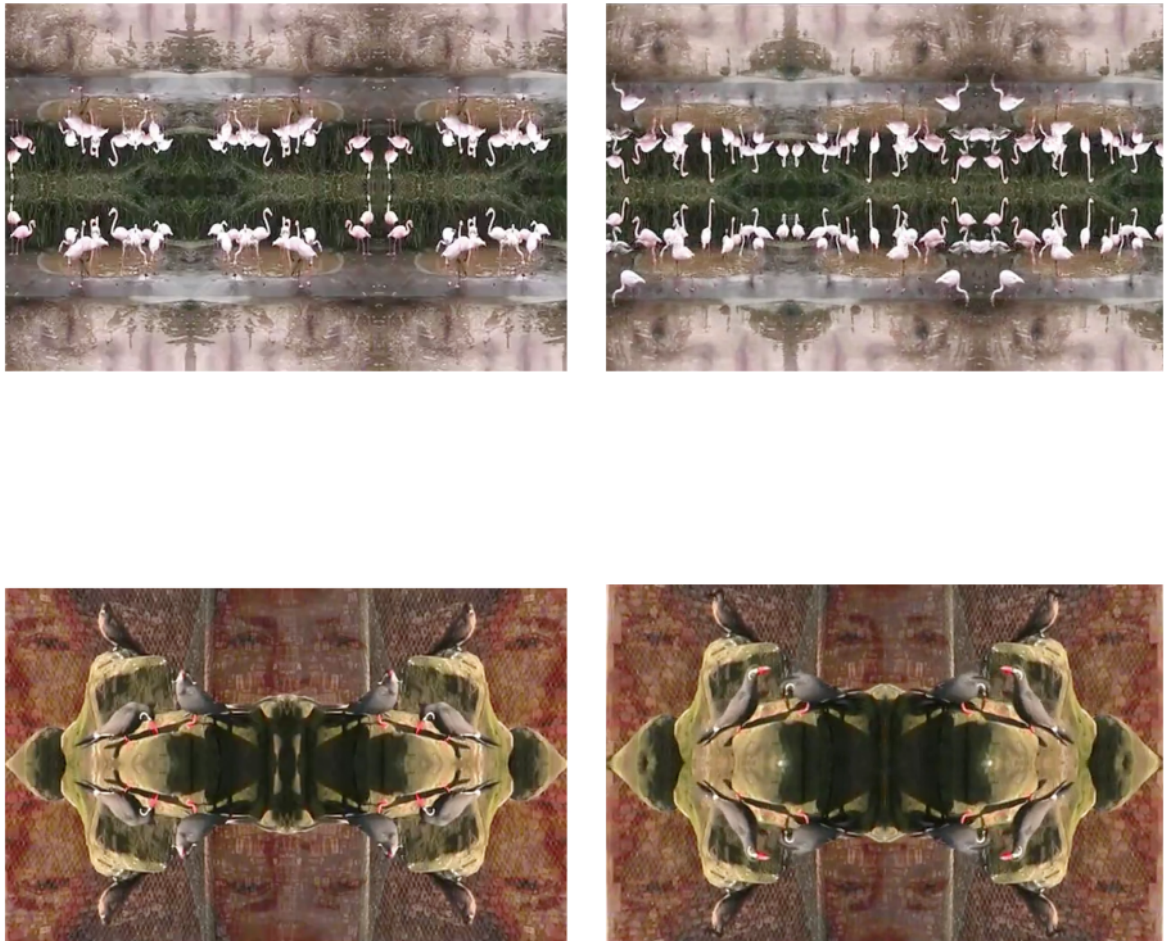


Fig 61. Screen shots from *Zoo Birds 3* and *Zoo Birds 4* (Gill Bliss, 2013-14).

Following a critique of the three trials made at the second stage of development, I realized that layering the human face at the edges of the composition had brought certain issues to the fore that would need to be confronted in order to progress the aesthetics of this experimental animation work. Within contemporary art criticism 'the face' and 'the gaze' are potent symbols of a range of political and social ideologies. For example Lacanian theories, that are prominent in film studies, see images of the face relating to 'a mirror stage' in which we recognize ourselves in others, bringing a dread of alienated subjectivity (Stam, 2000). Laura Mulvey, furthering ideas from Berger, coined

the phrase 'the male gaze' which expresses the disapproval of ways of creating and viewing imagery that objectifies women (Mulvey, 1999). Burt and others relating to Animal Studies disciplines have extended this with identifying a human gaze that objectifies animals (Burt, 2002). All of these theories concern ways in which 'looking at' or 'being looked at' can be identified with mechanisms of oppressive mastery, largely seeing images of the face as a dominating or destructive presence.

It was certainly not my intention to set up these sorts of connections in the work I was making – indeed I chose particular faces to use as imagery because for me they had links to states of joy, curiosity and wonder rather than being in any way malevolent. At this stage in the work I had attuned myself to engage with visual elements in the film for their sensual, aesthetic qualities as a way of defusing the weight of symbolic ideology that had become problematic when using *animal* imagery – opening up possibilities for different forms of knowing and different forms of interacting. Extending this approach to *human* imagery had been a natural progression for me and further unpacking of these ideas here will aid an understanding of this important step in the work. For this I turn to the work of Laura Marks who has promoted an appreciation of film imagery through 'haptic' or 'tactile' visuality (Marks, 2000).

Marks identifies that a 'mimetic' relationship with the world is key to 'haptic' experiencing of film. When viewing through a mimetic understanding, images are not investigated as symbols with layers of attributed meanings but are seen for the essential experiences provided by line, form, colour and texture present in the work. In other words, by working through our bodily senses rather than through linguistic and intellectual explanations, this brings a more compassionate engagement with the world. (Marks, 2000: 141). Marks writes:

...through mimesis we not only understand our world, but create a transformed relationship to it - or restore a forgotten relationship.

Mimesis shifts the hierarchical relationship between subject and object, indeed dissolves the dichotomy between the two, such that erstwhile subjects take on the physical, material qualities of the objects, while

objects take on the perspective and knowledgeable qualities of subjects (Marks, 2000: 141).

Using the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, who recognized three levels of representation, Marks believes that Western cultures have largely become stuck in forms of 'Thirdness' that create a dependency for predetermined symbolic narratives. It is through more appreciation of 'Firstness', the most immediate responses to the world around us, that different forms of communication and knowledge can develop (Marks, 2002). Following the art historian Reigl, Marks suggests that through mimetic ways of seeing, our most immediate visual impressions are translated into design elements, which 'creates a unified field only on a surface' (Marks, 2000: 6). In Western art this type of design is often relegated to the surfaces of applied art and crafts but Delueze and Guattari supported these mimetic designs: 'the haptic space is a space of freedom'. (Marks, 2000: 7).

Marks aligned 'haptic visuality' with 'the willingness to pull away from individual subjectivity' (Marks, 2002:39) and it was allowing this attitude to prevail that brought a step forward in developing a less anthropocentric approach, leading to 'zooanthropomorphic animation'. I was using design qualities in the work to create a space that distributed the subjectivity across all participants. In this way, dichotomies such as subject/object, human/animal, were dispelled without the need to evacuate the relationships that each animal, human and environmental contributor supplied as was necessary to this work about specific experiences.

In evaluating the experimental samples that I had created at this stage, I realized that I needed to take care in using the human face in such a way as to bring about a balanced layering of design elements. In this regard *Zoo Birds 3* and *4*, where the human face sits well within the colours and textures of the overall design, present more successful integrated compositions than the first two experiments *Zoo Birds 1* and *2*, where the face is more prominent. I experimented with including human fragmented forms other than the face, (an example is shown in Fig 62 using feet), but for me these trials produced less personally engaging

work and using the faces of participants involved in the shared experiences was not something that I felt it was necessary to avoid.



Fig 62. Experimental composition. Gill Bliss 2015-16

5.4.4 Experience in the studio - Stage 3:

During the animation experiments in Stage 2 I had used the live action footage with little distortion to the photographic/filmic imagery itself, concentrating instead on creating layered and repeat effects through manipulation of the screen space and timing (e.g. using symmetrical patterns and sequential rhythms). Moving into Stage 3 and experimenting with the possibilities that digital practice provided for more extreme manipulation and abstraction of the imagery was a way to push ideas further relating to sensual and embodied experiences.

In *Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age* (2001), Le Grice gives an explanation of digital experimental film as '(T)he attempt to stress the material conditions of production and viewing of works both as a creative basis of practice and as a strategy for the counteraction of narrative.' This brings a release from dramatic or documentary narrative modes, 'establishing a new basis for the creation and interpretation of linkages in the montage of cinematic sequences' (Le Grice,

2001: 235). For the Stage 3 experimental digital work, the most relevant aspects that Le Grice stresses are 'establishing the screen as surface', the use of representational elements 'without revision to an illusionistic (retrospective) symbology', and the creation of compositions based on 'image transformation, sound-image relationships and sequential structure' (Le Grice, 2001: 275-6). Marks also talks about possibilities with digital film making of building up layers: 'the effect of the surface density is to invite a kind of vision that spreads out over the surface of the image instead of penetrating depth' (Marks, 2000: 137).

Many early exponents of experimental digital film such as Jordon Belson and John and James Whitney wanted to tap into psychological, spiritual and emotional responses, both for the creator and the audience (Moritz, 1979). For me there are further links here with theories from Eastern philosophies that understand concepts of symmetry to be essential tools 'for a deeper understanding of the physical world' (Wade 2006: 54). Symmetrical and reflective patterns are eminently suited to digital technologies that make use of 'cut and paste', copy and transform, resize and repeat, to producing relatively simple imagery containing a high degree of content. I found these links between the digital process undertaken and aspects of the living world important, because they enabled me to feel grounded in an authentic experience of making, bringing me closer to the responses to nature that I wished to portray.

In my work the patterns created through digital manipulation had a meaning from the starting source material, but evolved through coincidences and choices, so becoming fragmented associations. The resulting impressions could not have been anticipated as they were created from a rolling sequence of responses: each small affect contributing to the accumulation of frame-by-frame animation work. Developing a recognizable working rhythm for each piece was a key factor in building a fluid and efficient process. Despite the fact that working digitally was largely through the clicking of a mouse and the tapping of keys, should a mistake be made, the working rhythm would also be broken – this then indicated a kind of muscle memory and unconscious 'flow' which brought pleasure to repetitive processes. I will quote the following passage from Le Grice in length, as it is particularly pertinent to my experience of digital film making at this time:

Sensibility is not the same as knowledge - it develops from the trained ability to work from the eye to the hand ultimately without the intervention of words – to make decisions directly in the discourse of art making itself, manipulating its components – colour, shape, texture, rhythm of line and so on. The sensibility which is a refined ability of the eye to discriminate, match and combine elements, builds up through practice. It costs a great deal in discipline, time and effort, but in a process that is so gradual, it becomes an invisible part of the way you work and is subsequently difficult to analyse (Le Grice, 2001:259).

For the next experiments in practice, I used digital filters at the beginning of the process to disrupt the photographic nature of the imagery, so that colours and forms became more integrated as surface pattern. This released any direct recognition of individual figurative elements, and instead used information, provided by the live action footage as traces of imagery that could be developed into immersive 'sensation experiences'. The aim of each composition was to make a response to the ambient mood of the particular relationship of bird, human and shared environment, with each experimental sample presenting very different sensual experiences.

Gaining an understanding for the language of rhythmic pattern-making opened up further possibilities using arrays and tilings; reflections and rotations; bilateral, vertical and horizontal symmetries. While much of the history of digital experimental film concerns imagery that is created within the computer, and/or the creation of totally abstract compositions of line, shape, colour and music, it has been possible for me to connect this theorizing to 'zooanthropomorphic' compositions. Due to the nature of creating animation work that requires each frame to be worked on, there is a great deal of time and material produced working through experimental ideas and building up to a few seconds of a successful working process. For example Fig 63 shows some of the experiments that led up to the animated samples *Zoo Birds* 5 and 6 and Fig 64 shows two compositions that were promising possibilities for future work. (These were not taken further as the process of this stage of work had already been proved to be functional.)

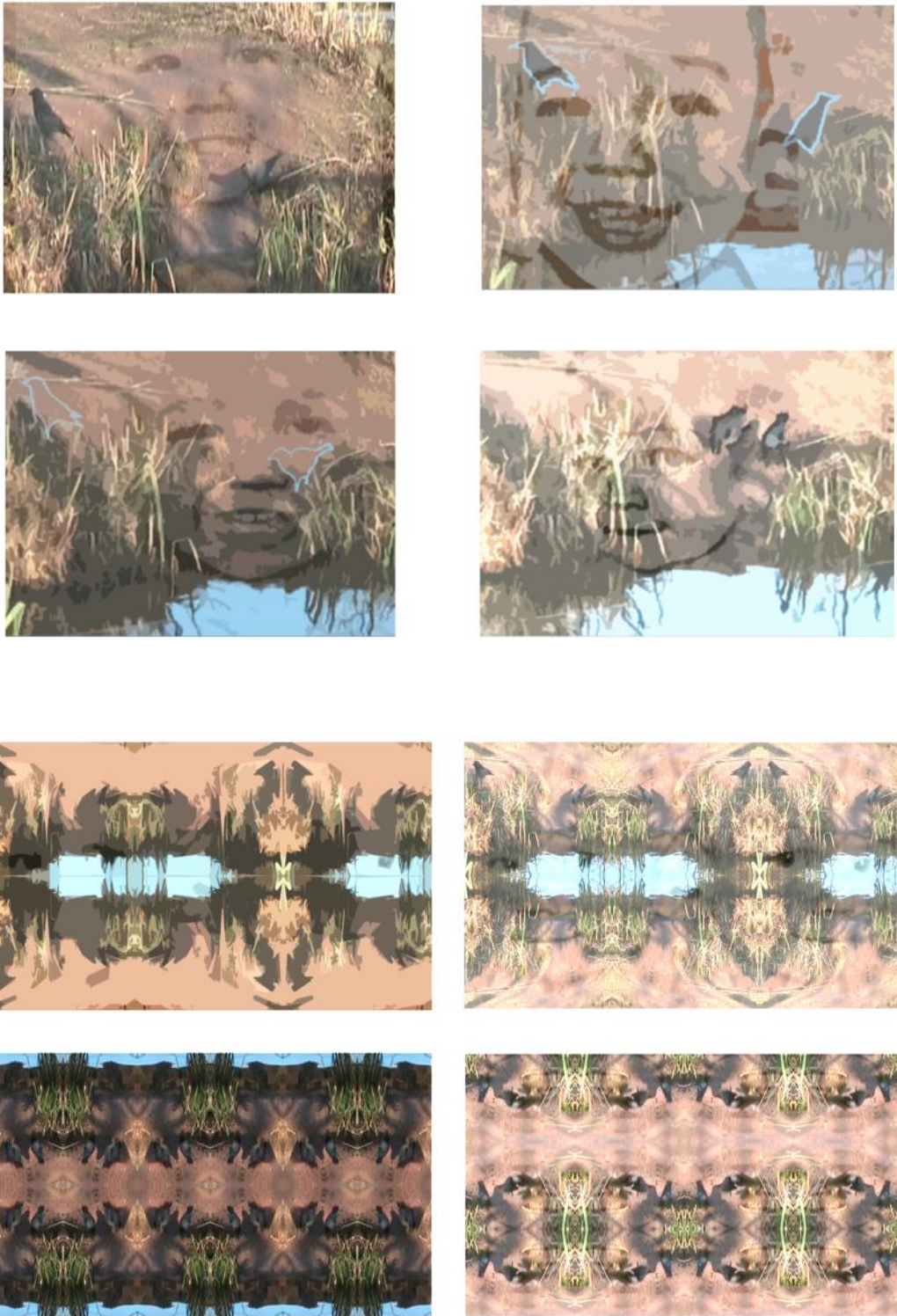


Fig 63. Development work leading to *Zoo Birds*5 and 6. Gill Bliss 2015-16

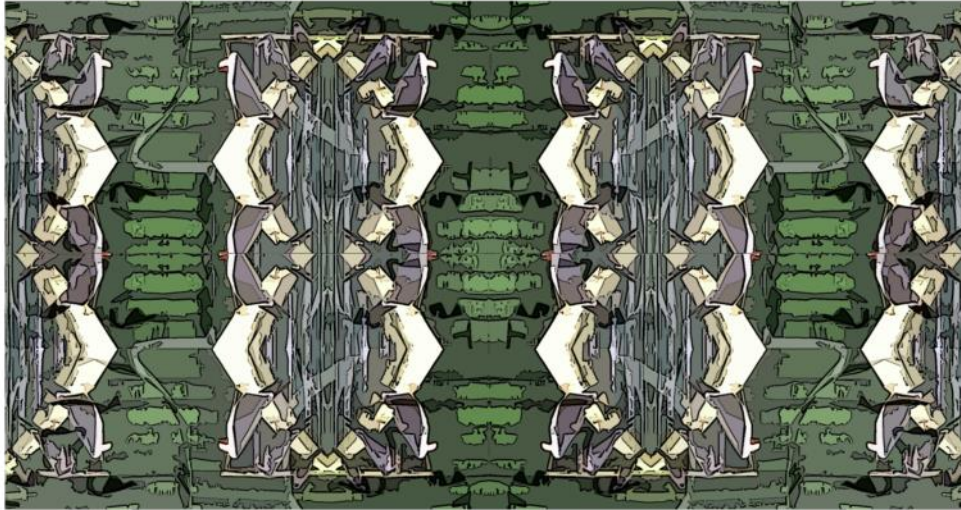


Fig 64. Experimental compositions. Gill Bliss 2015-16

Through the processes of creating *Zoo Birds 5* and *6*, I became more extreme in these manipulations so that the imagery moved away from relationships to representation of figurative elements and towards immersive patterns. This was a way of concentrating the integration of the human, animal and environmental elements.

The audio-visual nature of the animation work was addressed by manipulating the soundtrack that had been recorded as part of the filming process. Marks relates to 'haptic hearing' in conjunction with 'haptic visuality' and particularly recognizes settings where 'the aural boundaries between body and world may

feel indistinct: the rustle of trees may mingle with the sound of my breathing, or conversely the booming of music' (Marks, 2000: 183). This echoes feelings of 'ambient' environmental aesthetics described in Chapter 3.4.3.

Working with the diegetic film soundtrack I created patterns and rhythms by digitally layering, slowing or speeding up, creating stronger accents or softer echoes; thus building connection to the immersive nature of the visual work. Donaldson compares such work with that of creating woven cloth, with sound and images being meshed together as rhythm, pattern and movement (horizontal/weft) and pitch, amplitude and register (vertical/warp) (Donaldson, 2014: 128).

See *Zoo Birds 5* (Fig 65) and *Zoo Birds 6* (Fig 66), on the DVD or viewed online at <https://vimeo.com/user9679705/videos>

5.4.5 Experience in the studio - Stage 4

I then felt that there were creative opportunities to interact with the layered and blended film, by drawing my response over particular areas of movement – with each tracing being neither an animal nor human outline, but a collaboration of the two. This is similar to an animation morphing exercise where the very middle image bears no resemblance to the starting or finishing shapes, but is an 'in-between' caught in a constant transitioning. This further stage of experimentation evolved from connections to the theoretical analysis of early animation films (examined through 'design-led' characterization in Chapter 4.4). The outlining of shapes within the film imagery here was not to highlight human and animal structure, as is a usual mode of creating hybrid anthropomorphic characters in animation. Instead the deconstruction of the figurative forms through digital manipulation had opened up possibilities for outlining the interconnected *movement*, relating to Eisenstein's 'plasmaticness' (Eisenstein in Leyda, 1986) as a means of representing a shared 'aliveness' through 'zooanthropomorphic animation'.



Fig 65. Screen shot from *Zoo Birds 5*. Gill Bliss 2015-16



Fig 66. Screen shot from *Zoo Birds 6*. Gill Bliss 2015-16

Through further experiments two forms of work emerged: one in which the subtle material textures present in the live action footage remained as a still backdrop to moving outlines (*Zoo Birds 7*, Fig 67), and the other in which the digital filter process was pushed to an extreme to give a flat surface of coloured shapes, integrating the living creatures and environment (*Zoo Birds 8*, Fig 69). (Fig 68 shows some of the development working between the two processes.)

See *Zoo Birds 7* and *8*, on the DVD or viewed online at <https://vimeo.com/user9679705/videos>



Fig 67. Screen shot from *Zoo Birds 7*. Gill Bliss 2015-16

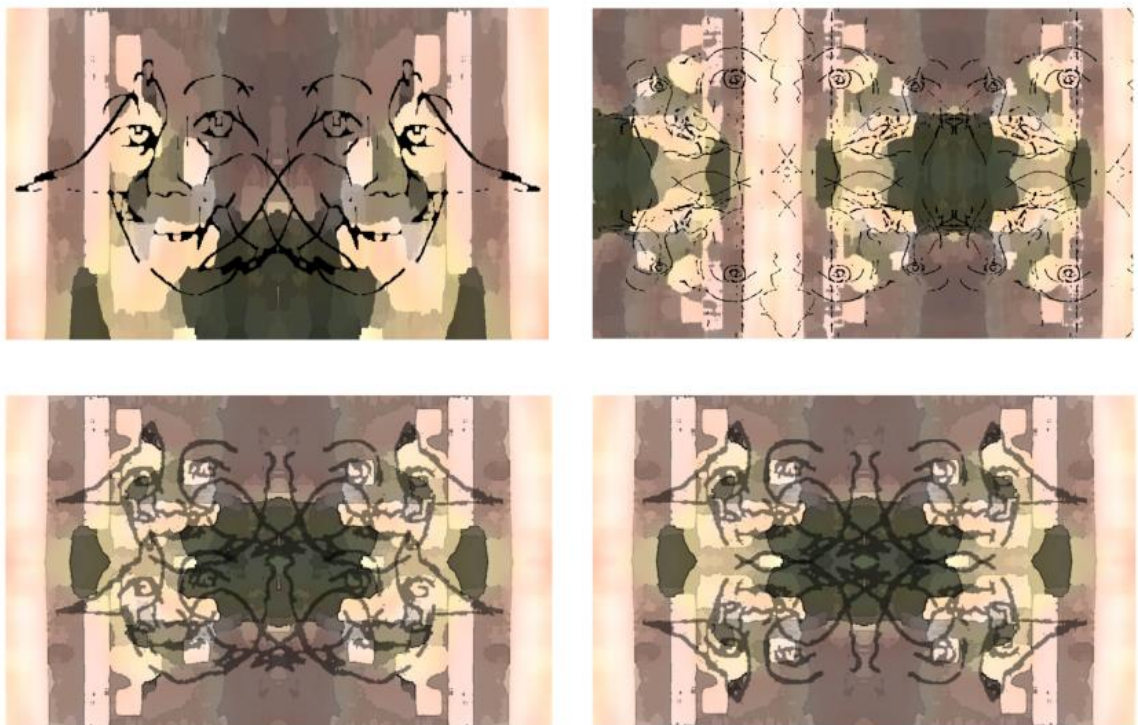


Fig 68. Development work leading to *Zoo Birds 8*. Gill Bliss 2015-16



Fig 69. Screen shot from *Zoo Birds 8*. Gill Bliss 2015-16

5.5. Conclusion.

Within the animation practice I had worked through many ideas as short experimental extracts and samples that now needed evaluating.

Having made the decision to move away from character figuration as the main focus of anthropomorphic animation work, I found my initial practical steps through a review of old work that used more experimental animation aesthetics and aligned this with a visual application of 'Blended Metaphor Theory' (Fauconnier and Turner, 2003). At Stage 1 of experimenting the purpose of the work was to respond to experiences of sharing environments with other living creatures, re-animating the film footage shot of actual experience and working expressively with impressions of colours, textures, forms, movements and sounds. By trying to let go of narrative as a driving force, I had actually allowed technical aspects of the film making to become a different sort of narrative leading from photographic to more abstract imagery and back again, which had not been my intention. The movement into Stage 2 of experimenting was therefore to explore more immersive animated sequences.

At Stage 2 of the practical work theoretical frameworks from Film Studies that expands ideas of embodied filmmaking was relevant, with the promotion of

sensual and textual aesthetic qualities of film work forming a link to Ambient Environmental Aesthetics discussed in Chapter 3.4.3. Photographic imagery with little distortion was used, with the space and time of the film manipulated frame by frame into layered patterns and sequenced rhythm. The work of Marks that advances 'haptic' and 'mimetic' ways of connecting was particularly helpful in understanding how surface design qualities can be used to relate to sensation in audio visual work. In this way a less anthropocentric form of relating to all contributors was able to emerge, as the dichotomies and hierarchical ideologies that are often present when interpreting figurative work conceptually was superseded by other concerns. Marks describes this intention of concentrating on aspects of design as privileging the material presence of the image itself rather than employing its representational capacity (Marks, 2000: 163).

Stage 3 took digital manipulation as a way of re-animating live action footage into further abstractions, retaining some of the information from the imagery, but concentrating more heavily on aspects of pattern and rhythm. This work was underpinned by principles that Le Grice and others have explored as particular facilities of digital filmmaking. In Stage 4 a drawn line was then used to follow morphing shapes as a way of highlighting the 'plasmatic' aliveness of layered imagery (Eisenstein in Leyda, 1986), connecting to 'design-led' qualities that were described in Chapter 4.4. This for me became the most personal and intimate of the creative practices because of the depth of choices needed to let go of representation completely, encouraging an engagement through bodily perception rather than conceptual identification. This is where I felt that I had most strongly developed and presented relationships between contemporary philosophical theories that explore ecological 'becoming' and fluid 'entanglements' (see Chap 3.4.2) and the practical opportunities that are enabled by experimental animation techniques.

Through these four stages of experimentation, I had now found satisfactory processes through which to create 'zooanthropomorphic animation' that responded to ways in which humans share the world with other living creatures. I was taking the actual experiences of everyday contact with animals to be an important and contemporary theme for this work, and I had formulated effective

creative practices, shown through the evidence of short experimental extracts/samples, that I would be able to translate into more extensive finished outcomes in future project work. This then was the culmination of this project of research that was seeking to 'redefine the anthropomorphic animal in animation'.

6 Research Conclusion

In chapter 2 of the thesis I have talked about the starting point of my questioning about anthropomorphism coming out of my work as a freelance model-maker making animation puppets, and as a sculptor making hybrid animal/human figures. In the writing up of this thesis, it has become clear to me that my attitude to anthropomorphism and each stage of the research journey has been shaped by these creative experiences (that of a model-maker and a sculptor). Key factors in this have been in exploring how relationships to animals sit within the creative process, and in understanding the different approaches to anthropomorphism that people from different backgrounds hold.

At Aardman Animations the animators taking on stop-motion puppets go through a process of 'acting-out', in order to find traits and movements for their characters. This is particularly relevant when working to a voice-over soundtrack such as in *Creature Comforts*, and the director, Richard (Golly) Goleszowski has developed a process called Live Action Video (LAV) where animators are filmed working through their section of soundtrack, to find gestures and expressions that they can work into their animation performances.⁸ In this, then, the animators are working both to human voices on the sound-track and to human actions through looking at their own bodies, in order to find an interpretation for the anthropomorphic/animal characters.

Before becoming a model-maker I had for many years worked with anthropomorphic figures in my own sculptural work, and my working process was deeply involved with the animals that I introduced into the work, exploring their bodily structures, details of textures, patterns and poses. This was interlinked with the structural and textural qualities of the materials I was using. The human element was therefore secondary to me, although necessary as a tool for creating personal interpretations rather than naturally realistic animal sculptures. I now realize that, although the figures I was making in my own work

⁸ The LAV process is shown in the 'making-of' film 'Eyeballs and Fish-lips' which is part of the special features on *Creature Comforts* 2.1 DVD (2005)

look similar in many respects to animation characters, such as those made at Aardman, this fundamental difference in approaches caused me to feel unsettled and confused when working on the animation freelance contracts. Whilst there is a good body of work theorising the way that anthropomorphic animal creatures have been used as symbolic representations depicting 'the human condition' (referred to throughout this thesis, for example in Wells, Pike, Collignon, Crafton and others), I could find no written description that matched the way I was approaching the work, and indeed struggled myself to articulate something that was a thought process between sensing and making, an exploration between form and material. This is how the main research question emerged, and the aims of this research project have been to fill this gap and add the experience of a model-maker/sculptor when conceptualizing anthropomorphism as a visual language. From this standpoint it has been possible to review future possibilities for 're-defining the anthropomorphic animal in animation'.

The first sub-question pointed to the need to understand how the term 'anthropomorphism' is used and defined. By examining the use of anthropomorphism as a descriptive term in human sciences of psychology, sociology and anthropology, I discovered that people could relate to animals through pre-verbal and primary responses (Winnicott, Case). Although most readily documented as a developmental process in children, this sensory and tacit way of relating to animals is just as important for adults as creating forms of natural history (for example being able to label and categorize animals), or using storytelling as a connecting device (for example in the form of myths and legends, fables and folktales). In a review of animal sciences, biology, ethology and primate studies, the concepts of 'Critical Anthropomorphism' (Burghardt) and 'Biocentric Anthropomorphism' (Berkoff) raised the profile of the animal element of any anthropomorphic partnerships. Animals are seen as active social partners that bring specialist capacities and experiences to human/animal interactions. This theoretical investigation had answered the question: 'what is 'anthropomorphism' and how is this term used across different fields of knowledge and cultural settings?'

Scientific and philosophical views about anthropomorphism laid out in Chapter 3 also demonstrates that reviewing a wider discourse surrounding the use of anthropomorphic representations can bring greater clarity to the development of a respectful and ethical sensibility towards the creating and viewing of work that includes interpretations of animal imagery. It is not necessary for anthropomorphic descriptions that employ similarities and differences between animal species, to see the human as dominant. This was echoed in contemporary philosophical attitudes to animals and the representation of animals, in which the idea of ‘anthropocentrism’ came to the fore and attitudes to animals that are hierarchical, dualistic or oppositional, were critiqued (Baker, Burt, Fudge, Weil). Here are the beginnings of ideas that could be worked into the new practice, providing an answer to the research question: Is it possible to approach creative work using anthropomorphism in ways that do not promote a strongly anthropocentric bias?

In Chapter 4 I analyzed anthropomorphic animation characters using a new theoretical framework that identifies anthropomorphic characters as ‘human-led’, ‘animal-led’ and ‘design-led’. This provides a way of resolving ‘anthropocentric bias’ in animation, by re-defining anthropomorphic animation characters in a way that raises awareness of perceptual responses (aesthetic and sensual) to animal elements, rather than relying on conceptual symbolic referencing of human content.

Chapter 5 (as in Chapter 2) makes use of auto-ethnographic account to document the journey of the practice from character-based animation to more abstract and experimental ways of working. From the research covered in Chapter 3 philosophical ideas promoting interconnections between living species, and the importance of actual experience with animals (Haraway, Ingold, Deleuze and Guattari), became influential while making practical animation work – described as ‘reflecting on theory in practice’ in the description of methodology (see the Introduction chapter). Concepts developed in Environmental Aesthetics, such as the importance of ambient and sensual responses (Foster) and a ‘sense of wonder’ for animal details and surfaces (Hepburn) were particularly helpful when thinking about new forms of animation that did not build imagery from a

dramatic script, but found a basis in more lyrical and sensory experiences of nature. This new practical work is then also providing answers to the research sub-questions 2 and 3 by finding a creative approach using anthropomorphism in ways that do not promote a strongly anthropocentric bias, and using anthropomorphic imagery within animation to respond to contemporary issues surrounding human/animal interactions.

Re-animating live action film of animals through digital manipulations became a fitting technique for creating the new animation work, because this allowed for source material to be collected from actual experience with animals, and the animating process to retain an openness to possibilities that presented in the course of the making. The 'Blended Metaphor Theory' (Fauconnier and Turner), became a framework for re-defining an approach to anthropomorphism in animation, that allowed the gestalt of the animated film to become the focus, rather than separating out characters as anthropomorphic elements. The development of the audio visual work created from overlapping human, animal and environmental forms, colours, movements and sounds, was aided by gaining an understanding of concepts from Film Studies, particularly the work of Laura Marks, in which embodied engagement with moving image work is facilitated through 'haptic' and 'mimetic' forms of visuality. Connections to historical animated forms that work with a fluidity between borders and outlines, and a mutability of form have also been important (defined in Chapter 4). The resulting samples of re-animated film are newly defined within this research as 'zooanthropomorphic animation', in which a contemporary rendering of an interconnected anthropomorphic animal can be identified. This answers the main research question: 'how might a redefining of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representation bring a new impetus to the use of animal imagery within contemporary animation practice?'

6.1 Reviewing the methodology.

In the 'Introduction', I put forward an individual methodological framework based on an action research cycle (Kolb and Schon) that had more in common

with Dewey's views on 'experiential learning' than with more recent and structured updates. In my research, the actions of reading, reflecting, writing and making are seen as tools for a cycle that breaks into stages of 'gathering information', 'working with information allowing ideas to emerge' and 'confident working with ideas' (see Fig 63). The tools could be used when appropriate at any stage throughout the research cycle, with individual researchers and research projects finding a different pattern of usage to be relevant. This model was based on my usual mode of artistic practice, and on experiences of teaching students a sustainable way to develop creative ideas.

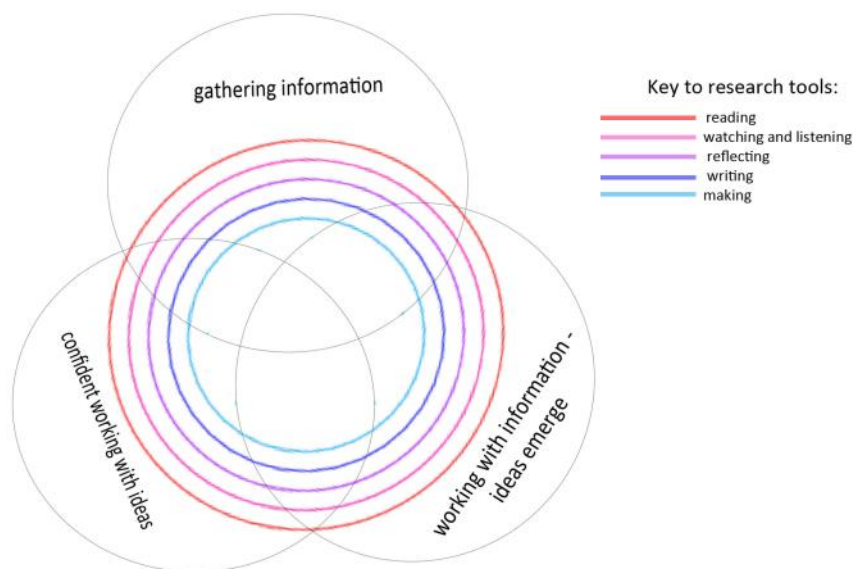


Fig 70. Integrated Cycle of Reflective Research.

In undertaking this research project, reading became a major way of gathering information, as this was my access to ideas based in philosophical, scientific and theoretical works. This may seem an obvious point to make, but it is worth indicating just how much my approach to the topic of anthropomorphism was broadened by an understanding of cross-disciplinary ideas in literary works, that I now saw as source material to inspire creative ideas and not just to be read for the theorizing of finished creative outputs. This truly integrated methodology was something that only started to be beneficial to the research journey once I had realised the best creative ideas were generated when both the practice and the theory worked together.

A further point that I only fully resolved at a later stage of the research was to realize how essential it was to find my own rhythm of writing that allowed time for gathering of relevant information, then experimenting with ideas in an open process of discovery, before attempting to move into finished drafts. Once I trusted that this worked for writing in exactly the same creative way as it did for art/moving image work I could settle into a productive and effective progression of research.

In making 'reflecting' a tool alongside others, rather than indicating it as a special stage of research, I am wishing to show that it is used throughout the research process. I have found 'reflecting' to be a continual and necessary part of gathering and reviewing information through reading, listening and seeing; a necessary part of exploring ideas through artwork and writing, and necessary to reviewing creative work achieved. My preference is to recognise the continuity of this research tool, rather than to label different forms of reflecting (such as the reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action that Schon promotes) with different stages set aside for each. I also have found a value in acknowledging more tacit and embodied 'action and response' forms of learning that are not easily turned into literary explanations. In the model of action research that I have outlined I do not see any of these research tools as divided or oppositional body/mind elements that indicate separated stages of research, but suggest that an interweaving of action and reflection tools brings a more natural flow to a creative research process. This, again, is building on the work of Dewey, who believed that dualisms of thinking were unproductive for an 'experiential learning' approach.

On coming to the end of this project it is now possible to see the research cycle demonstrated in different forms. For example, it is possible to see the writing of thesis chapters as individual cycles with the process of gathering information, working with information and producing more confident work evident in each. However, my preference is to understand the whole research project as one cycle, as this reflects the building of confidence throughout the journey of the research, with both the thesis and practice working together as finished

outcome. Ideas moving on from this project will then see the cycle become a spiral of future research possibilities.

6.2 Original contribution to knowledge.

- The research has made an examination of anthropomorphism in animation its contribution to the field of Animation Studies. Part of this has been to devise a new theoretical paradigm for analyzing anthropomorphic characters that is based on aesthetic and sensual perceptual responses to animal elements rather than conceptual symbolic referencing of human experiences. The framework may also be useful to character designers and animators when creating new anthropomorphic characters, and to provide a structure for teaching character design.
- Choosing to concentrate the practice on experimental 'samples' provided a method that maximized the research nature of working with new ideas. This then allowed possibilities of exploring the nature of 'zooanthropomorphic animation', which through this research has opened up new perspective on the use of anthropomorphic imagery.
- The research uncovered ways of connecting to other contemporary disciplines such as 'Animal Studies' and 'Ecology', so that animation may be a useful tool for disseminating ideas and engaging a wider audience with these ideas.
- The thesis and practical samples of animation work document a practice moving from character and narrative based animation work to more experimental animation techniques and aesthetics. This provides an insight into how creative development proceeds through exploration, problem solving and decision-making, and how input from both theory and practice makes this change possible. It also provides a reflection on differences between industry production and independent work in animation.
- An integrated reflective cycle was devised as a creative model of research that combines theory and practice. This is based on my experience both as a creative practitioner, and as a lecturer on a wide range of courses where the teaching of a sustainable method for developing creative ideas has been

necessary. This enabled me, by the end of the project, to be working with theory elements in exactly the same way as practice elements, seeing both writing and animating as creative processes. It is possible that this will be helpful to future researchers undertaking practice based PhDs.

6.3 Research outcomes and indicated future work.

During the course of the research, I presented papers at the following conferences as a way of disseminating my research (see the Appendix section):

Bliss, G. July 2015 'The Animated Other' – animation, animals and environmental aesthetics. Paper presentation, Society of Animation Studies International Conference 2015 – 'Beyond the Frame'. Canterbury Christ Church University.

Bliss, G., Nov 2014, 'The Elephant in the Room', Paper presentation, The Animation and Engagement Symposium, Bradford Animation Festival.

Bliss, G., 2013 'Animals with Attitude', Critical Perspectives on Animals in Society Conference, Exeter University. Conference proceedings pp37 - 44:
<https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/bitstream/handle/10871/8582/critical-perspectives-on-animals-in-society-2012-conference-proceedings.pdf?sequence=1>

Bliss, G., July 2012. 'Anthropomorphism and Animal Images', Poster Presentation, Minding Animals Conference, Utrecht University.

Bliss, G., March 2012, 'Animals with Attitude' as part of 'Textual Animals' Panel, Paper Presentation, Critical Perspectives on Animals in Society Conference, Exeter University, March 2012. Video recording: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMWikRNNpcE&feature=c4-overview-vl&list=PL48D830CF7EFC742B>

Bliss, G., March 2012. 'Animation and Anthropomorphism'. Paper Presentation, New Perspectives in Animation Symposium, Kings College/Birbeck College, London.

I also organized a research symposium called 'Animation and Public Engagement' (Nov 18th 2014, Bradford) as a way of helping researchers from different universities to interact, and for people with different interests in animation to think about future possibilities for animation in the public sphere.

From the research undertaken, there are many possibilities for working collaboratively with researchers from Animal Studies, Ecology and

Environmental disciplines to provide moving image and audio-visual elements of research projects. Within the field of animation, I am looking to present further papers and submit work to be published based on the theorizing of anthropomorphism within animation, and to make short films to be submitted to festivals and online moving image sites. The nature of experimental 'zooanthropomorphic' animation creates possibilities for the creation of immersive installations, taking animation outside screen viewing and into gallery and site specific settings. This creates links with categories such as 'Moving Poems' and Visual Music' that may also provide possibilities for future collaborative work.

7 DVD Contents and Film Links:

The animation film samples entitled *Zoo Birds 1-8*, which make up the practice element of this submission, can be viewed online at:

<https://vimeo.com/user9679705>

On the DVD there are folders with:

1. The animation film samples shown individually as *Zoo Birds 1-8*
2. 2 Power-Points, each of which is roughly 20mins long as a presentation:
 1. The Journey of Creative Practice, which gives an overview of the practical work and the movement from character based to experimental animation work.
 2. The New 'Zooanthropomorphic' Animation Practice, which focuses on the final explorative processes and samples of experimental animation work.
3. Power-point presentations of papers given at research conferences and symposiums.

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10. Appendix 1:

This is a peer reviewed essay that is now online as part of the conference proceedings for 'Critical Perspectives on Animals in Society', Exeter University:

<https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/bitstream/handle/10871/8582/critical-perspectives-on-animals-in-society-2012-conference-proceedings.pdf?sequence=1>

Animals with Attitude

Abstract:

The history of animation is interlaced with the use of anthropomorphism and zoomorphism as a device for creating popular characters and narratives. In the 'post-modern' critique of animal representation in art, there has been a largely negative debate surrounding anthropomorphism and the symbolic use of animal forms; echoing theories formulated for scientific studies in biosciences, social anthropology and social geography. How, then, can animation be understood as a relevant creative medium for investigating relationships between humans and non-human animals in the modern world?

The first section of the paper will identify a range of anthropomorphic forms and show how these are present in character design and narration. Links will be made to an understanding of human psychology (Winnicott, 1971; Langer, 1953); and the development of storytelling (Boyd, 2009; Ingold, 1994). This will include an exploration of 'the metaphor' as a literary and visual device capable of bringing richness to the language of moving image work (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002).

Moving on, the role that animation has played in a present day discourse of ecological and socio-biological issues will be highlighted and related to modern day discourses. In this way, the unique qualities that animation has as an expressive art form will be shown to be eminently suited to portraying the diversity of experiences that human and non-human animals share.

Anthropomorphism and Zoomorphism: definitions and frameworks

Animal characters have played an integral part in the history of animation, through ongoing changes in technique (from simple drawn lines through to present day special effects), and development of narratives (from two-minute gags to full-length feature films). Usually, the characters are not truly animal in form or nature, but are hybrids of humans and animals: anthropomorphic or zoomorphic creatures.

‘Anthropomorphism: the attribution of human characteristics to a god, animal or object.

Zoomorphism: the attribution of animal form to a god, human or object.’ (Oxford English Dictionary)

From these two definitions we can understand a range of imagery that uses combinations of animal and human characteristics; hybrid creatures containing both animal and human references. This type of character has been present in some form throughout the history of mankind and in most cultures – from cave paintings; through different religious forms (e.g. shamanism; Egyptian gods; deities of Hinduism); in myths and cultural folk tales; in a wealth of adult and children’s literature and political and social satire. Each new technological advance (the type and range of materials and techniques) has also brought forth a development of hybrid creations; from drawings made in mud and charcoal; through etched and printed book illustrations; to present day digital and moving image film-work. When thinking about the design of these characters, it is possible to create a scale of reference, which has animal characteristics at one end and human characteristics at the other and all forms of hybridization in between: see Fig. 1



Fig 1.

The idea of a sliding scale of anthropomorphism is not new and examples that examine animation characters are discussed in the writing of Collignon (Collignon, 2008) and Atkinson (Atkinson, 2006). Jardim also describes animation characters, but

includes inanimate objects at one end of the scale, humans at the other and animals in between, in a reworking of the sort of scale referencing the interplay of human characteristics and mechanical/robotic devices (Jardim, 2011).

Further investigation suggests that other factors need to be included when creating anthropomorphic/zoomorphic characters, and so we have the formation of grids of reference rather than a simple scale. Certain forms of character design have developed because of the working process of animation: the processes and materials affect elements of drawing, rendering or making the figures. These designs are now seen to be natural animation forms and themselves often have an influence on the work of young animators, but their inherent characteristics were actually developed because of needs of the studio process; the constraints of materials or techniques. This can be followed, for example, through the changing shape of Mickey Mouse, which became simplified to ovals and tubes over a number of years; a body more easily drawn and manipulated in the animation studio process. In my own experience, working as a model maker in stop-motion workshops, the designs of characters was modified in different ways in order to make puppets function as moving figures, and to work efficiently with materials, timescales and budgets. It was because certain features were easily and successfully achieved that they became key design elements, for example the exaggerated facial features recognized in 'Aardman' characters that make effective use of the mould making and replacement nature of plasticine stop-motion animation. In my anthropomorphic grid then, 'design from process' becomes an important factor influencing the makeup of characters.

Cultural factors and the knowledge of stories, myths and legends, world religions and different societies are now a huge melting pot of ideas from which anthropomorphic and zoomorphic characters can be re-assimilated. Today we must also include film, animation, media and advertising as part of the shared cultural knowledge from which future work can be drawn. 'The Bestial Ambivalence Model' created by Wells, recognizes cultural knowledge as a defining feature of animation characters, and also includes the psychological context, the intent of actions which also adds to the characterization. An important point is that characters may have changing roles over the course of a film rather than one firm plotting according to their outline form and characteristics (Wells, 2009).

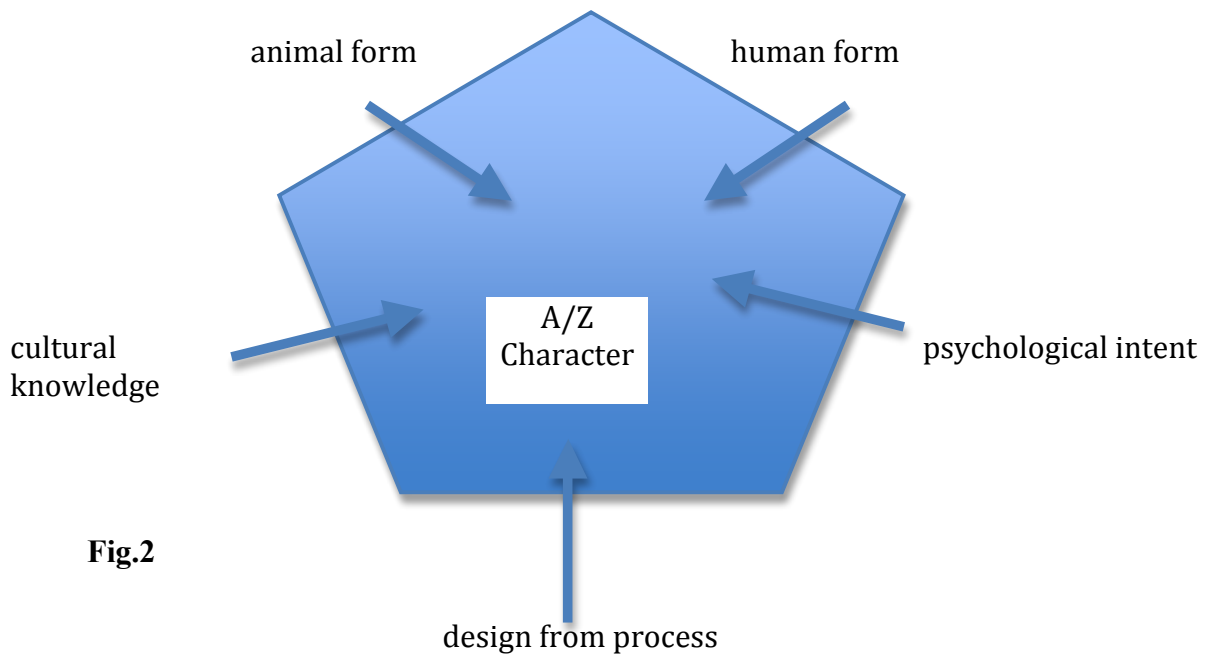


Fig.2

A framework, such as that illustrated in Fig 2, may help to give some order to the melting pot of elements that come together to make up anthropomorphic characters; but anthropomorphism is discussed across a wide range of disciplines including philosophy, theology and sciences, each presenting a ‘range and complexity of ideas’ (Mitchell, Thompson and Miles, 1997). Here too we find confusion, and in my view, this holds the key to much of the criticism of anthropomorphism and zoomorphism used in art and forms of creative image making such as in the following extract, taken from Yvettes Watt’s article for ‘Antennae’:

...animals are so often marginalised in recent contemporary art, even when they appear at first to be the primary subject. Accordingly, the respectful representation of the animal as an individual and the avoidance of using the animal as symbol or signifier is a matter of great importance to be heeded by artists and curators, lest the animals be exploited as beasts of burden forced to carry inappropriate conceptual agendas, allowing for a range of problematic and unethical uses and representations in animal artworks (Watt, 2011).

It is personal experience of such negative response to my own creative work that has led me to look for ways in which I can gain and promote more of an understanding for anthropomorphic and zoomorphic imagery.

In Defence of Symbolic Storytelling

Philosophical ideas relating to animals dating back to Aristotle tended to set up a divide between human and non-human animals and create hierarchies of competency with humans always at the top. This is further accented by western Christian religions – giving dominion over animals and making humans in the likeness of god. Whilst in Eastern religions we find a different outlook, that humans have a more custodial role, the state of being animal is still seen to be a lesser or lower state than that of being human (Fudge, 2002). From philosophy and religion, there has been a feeling that any comparison of animals and humans is demeaning to humans.

In many of the sciences, such as the biological sciences, social anthropology and social geography the traditional methods of gathering data were felt to be biased by human interpretation and only quantifiable forms of data collection became accepted as valid scientific work. More recently, things have eased and qualitative description is felt to give richness to otherwise bland and statistical data. J.S Kennedy makes the point in ‘The New Anthropomorphism’ that during the last fifty years (the book being written in 1992) ‘the pendulum has swung both ways between anthropomorphism and behaviourism.’ The radical behaviourists favour a Cartesian type view that animal actions are simply responses to reflexes and tropisms without conscious effects of goal orientated thought. Kennedy cautions against errors in ascribing intentional influences to animal behaviour, and seems to see the new sciences of Ethology, Behavioural Ecology and Social Biology as being particularly in danger of succumbing to ‘unwitting anthropomorphism’ or ‘neo-anthropomorphism’ with the use of a subjective, everyday language (Kennedy, 1992).

From both of these areas, philosophy and science, we can see an uneasiness and ambivalence towards the use of anthropomorphism, which would link humans and other animals together. While, historically, this was because humans were felt to be debased by too close a connection to animal nature, more recent concerns to bring animal welfare to prominence have transformed this, so that it is now felt to be

degrading of animals to be used to portray characters that are funny, evil or highly stereotyped. Further complications arise with representations of animals including anthropomorphic characters used to subvert notions of authenticity in advertising and promotional media (Potter, 2010).

All of these ways of thinking about animals have had an impact on how artists' work is discussed and theorized, with some strong views against the use of any form of symbolic animal imagery. My starting point for redressing the balance and throwing a positive light on anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations has been to understand the drive behind the production of these images that I and many other artists feel is at the core of our work.

Looking at research in social anthropology and social archaeology, storytelling has progressed alongside cultural development. The most basic form of storytelling was the making of lists of animals and other things in the world. With more complicated forms of human interactions there came a need for storytelling to evolve into different forms such as myths and legends, moral tales and lastly novels, each related to ways of understanding differing aspects of the world. The use of symbolic reference and metaphor reflect the fact that the human brain is capable of abstract thinking, which has important implications for survival.

Such "expression" is the function of symbols: articulation and presentation of concepts. Herein symbols differ radically from signals. A signal is comprehended if it serves to make us notice the object or situation it bespeaks. A symbol is understood when we conceive the idea it presents (Langer, 1953).

Anthropomorphic use of animals in imagery and narrative has been present through the evolving nature of symbolic storytelling and can therefore be seen as integral to human cultural development (Boyd, 2009 and Ingold, 1994).

Looking at research in psychology and psychoanalysis, Winnicott (1971) and Case (2005) state that having a relationship with transitional objects and phenomena is an important part of human development, allowing for the working through of problems and anxieties, and the understanding of concepts such as 'similarity and difference',

‘internal and external space’. These often take the form of animal characters. This does not mean that all anthropomorphic and zoomorphic creative work has to stay in childish form, but it does mean that most adults will respond to and recognize this type of symbolic referencing. So, using characterization and narrative in an anthropomorphic form is documented as a natural part of cognitive development.

Animation beyond entertainment

In recent years animation feature films have taken ecological issues as part of their narrative content. Examples are seen in ‘Happy Feet’ (2006, directed by George Miller), which weaves a tale around issues of overfishing and the less well-known ‘Ferngully’ (1992, directed by Bill Kroyer), which builds narrative on concerns for loss of habitat. There is of course debate as to the extent that the advertising and merchandizing surrounding films produced by large studios overshadows any positive messages within the films. Whilst there may be some novelty in the anthropomorphic penguins, fish, bats and so on who now play leading character roles, all seem to contain a large design input resembling the stuffed toy or plastic ornament that will undoubtedly follow on from the film screenings. My opinion is that these films have a job to do - they are made to be mass entertainment. But, it is because this work reaches such a large number of people that they can also give a platform for important issues. Animation and moving image is particularly attractive because it contains image, narrative, sound, movement in space and time. We need to be proactive as viewers in evaluating the different layers of ideas present, working to recognize the symbolic and metaphorical references that can be highlighted as a reading of the work, and making these issues ripe for discussion.

It is perhaps less well known that many charities are now following in the footsteps of the large studios, in realizing the possibilities that animation holds for promoting ecological issues. Simple but effective design, colour and texture, often with a touch of humour; combine all of this with movement and attractive characters are brought to life in a way that undoubtedly ‘draws people in’ (Figs. 3 and 4).



Fig 3

2007, 2011 Bernard the Gurnard, a mascot for the 'The Wildlife Trusts' Marine Bill campaign. Archeplago



Fig 4

“Pocoyo™” created by Zinkia Entertainment. Global Kids’ Ambassador for World Wildlife Fund’s Earth Hour Initiative 2011 and 2012

In my research I am using categories found in the sciences, such as ‘companion animals’, ‘animals with diverse taxonomies’ and ‘animals within issues of ecology’ to document animation work and establish cross-disciplinary links. Examples are shown in Figs. 5, 6 and 7.



Fig 5
Animals within ecological issues

Rango 2011
Director Gore Verbinski



Fig 6

Companion animals

Wallace and Grommit,
Aardman Animations since
1989



Fig 7

Animals with diverse taxonomy

The Cameraman's Revenge 1911
Director Vladislav Starevich

Thus it is possible to highlight the way that, throughout the history of animation production, a diverse range of animal life has been brought to the attention of viewers. Of course these definitions themselves change and develop, but the fundamental principle lying behind this work is still strong; that the presence of a wide range of animal representations throughout the history of animation practice can usefully

document human interaction with other animals and provide a means for disseminating information and inspiring future collaborative discourse.

Moving forward with Artistic Expression and Anthropomorphism

We now come to the indisputable fact that one of the main uses of animal/ human hybrid imagery in expressive artwork is to represent ‘the human condition’; to explore personal issues, to present political statements and examine social conditions to do with humans. This is the basis for much of the criticism of anthropomorphic representations. In relation to this, whilst it is positive that art and forms of creative out-put are finding a place within cross-disciplinary academic relationships concerning animals, it seems that presentational techniques are dominating (i.e. the use of photographic imagery and live action film). In discussion, I have discovered the reasoning that, to remove the mark of the individual artist and reduce any creative or imaginative interpretation is favoured as it gives a greater prominence to animals themselves. At this point, I feel it necessary to explain from an artist’s point of view, what is happening when imaginative and invented imagery that includes animals is created; to put forward a case for this creative work reflecting positively on societies awareness for animals.

One of the main points to make is that many artists who use animal imagery in an interpretive way (with fragmented form; manipulation of form; hybrid animal/human form and so on) are strongly involved in studying animals, not in a scientific way, but with deep interest and respect. This attention to animals is good; curiosity, fascination, wonder, delight; all of these things can be passed on, to family, to friends, to colleagues, to audiences.

From my own experience as an artist creating figurative work that includes combinations of animal and human structures, characteristics, textures and movement; I have always felt that the images that evolve from the creative process are neither animal nor human, but a discourse of emotions, responses, interaction. The main point that I am trying to express in the work is the relationship between human and non-human animals; the involvement of diverse living beings. As Fudge suggests, ‘(I)t is this paradox of like and not like, same and different , that exists in our fascination with animals’ (Fudge, 2002).

It is true that in trying to find a way of expressing the essence of both human and animal presence in the work, an abstraction and symbolization takes place, but there is no hierarchy of one above another, one taking from another (see Fig 8).

For this reason I put forward ‘the metaphor’ as described in the Blending Theory developed by Fauconnier and Turner as a way of referencing this work. Here, two or more ideas are blended together to form a new entity (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002) and whilst this is largely documented as a literary form, it would also seem to work well for visual outputs.



Fig 8 Personal work by Gill Bliss

It should be understood that at this point, the research into anthropomorphism and zoomorphism has shifted from being seen as a device for character and narrative development, to a broader interpretation of an animation film gestalt. I have re-examined the definitions of ‘anthropomorphism’ and ‘zoomorphism’, which make use of the ‘form of animals’ and the ‘characteristics of humans’ and have taken the view that ‘form’ and ‘characteristics’ can be signified by fragmented elements and stylized or abstracted representations. My personal interest is now to create short, animation films that use experimental techniques to create hybridized and metamorphic forms; emotional and aesthetic qualities, to represent interactions and relationships between diverse living beings.

Conclusion

In this paper, the overarching theme of how anthropomorphism and zoomorphism has been used to portray animals in animation has provided several lines of research. Firstly the definition and setting up of frameworks is used as a means of analyzing the

design of characters and narrative content, thus providing a way of discussing historical work and thinking about future creative development in this field.

Some viewers find any representation that shows a mix of form between human and non-human animals disturbing, abhorrent or trivial. The question arises as to whether animals themselves are being trivialized or being made invisible when worked into creative and imaginative fictions. A second strand of research looking at psychology and sociology highlights the importance of storytelling for human cognitive and cultural development, and certainly the use of hybrid animal characters has played a part in this. Moving image and animation film work are modern tools for storytelling. It has been part of this investigation to look beyond the populist notion of ‘cartoons’ as largely children’s entertainment and understand the platform that animated film has provided for a full range of ideas concerning environmental and ecological issues, and human interaction with other animals. In this section it is seen that an analysis of animation film using definitions recognized in animal studies, may bring possibilities for future cross-disciplinary collaborations.

The last section of the paper relates the most personal element of research; how as a creative practitioner I am using animation to investigate and communicate my interests in experiencing interactions with animals. In this work, I am choosing to put aside the form of character development and linear narrative most usually associated with anthropomorphism/zoomorphism in animated television and cinema productions. In this new work, the storytelling devices are replaced by blended metaphorical references that suggest interaction and connection between individual beings. The hybrid notions defined by anthropomorphism and zoomorphism are still present, but the forms of human and non-human animals are fragmented and abstracted, wishing to connect to emotional and psychological responses to experiences with animals.

The starting point for this paper was to find working definitions for ‘anthropomorphism’ and ‘zoomorphism’. To close, I now re-examine these words and find myself dissatisfied with the term ‘anthropomorphism’, which bears such a confusion of ideas that it is no longer a helpful defining word. Winnicott (1971) has used ‘zooanthropomorphism’, which seems to portray more fittingly the inclusive nature of the metaphorical images I am creating. Milton (in Knight, 2005) prefers the

word 'egomorphism' as describing individual experiences and responses to other beings. Both of these words I will take forward as more appropriate for future research in this area.

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