TRAVERSING THE BACK DOOR OF THE MIND

Directing Imaginative Stories To Generate Meaningful
Dialogue About Biblical Truths In a Materialist World

BY HEATHER BIRKELAND

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Dialogue About Biblical Truths In a Materialist World

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⋙ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ⋘

THANK YOU!!
THANK YOU!!

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IN MYSELF THE DESIRE
FOR MY TRUE COUNTRY,
WHICH I SHALL NOT
FIND TILL AFTER DEATH;

I MUST MAKE IT THE
MAIN OBJECT OF LIFE TO
PRESS ON TO THAT OTHER
COUNTRY AND TO HELP
OTHERS TO DO THE SAME.

- C.S.LEWIS

ABSTRACT

Ontological materialism hinders evangelistic efforts because it precludes any dialogue about spiritual matters, especially regarding the importance of cultivating an eternal value system. Furthermore, potential meaningful dialogue is inhibited by an audience that routinely rejects overtly Christian materials, which results in failure to develop the correct contextual understanding regarding biblical spiritual truths.

The writer provides an overview of the philosophy of ontological materialism and its effects on people, the impact of imaginative storytelling, and the psychology of narrative persuasion. Firstly, the selected thesis topic will explore how non-Christians could potentially approach and engage in biblical truths without hostility through the back door of the mind via storytelling and imaginative engagements. Secondly, the writer will produce an animated short based on a biblical eternal value system as the visual solution to exemplify how imaginative storytelling can create an enticing environment that facilitates meaningful dialogue on spiritual truths.

≫ THE GLITCH

≫ CHAPTER ONE
introduction

CHAPTER ONE,

INTRODUCTION...

"If we've only got one try, if we've only got one life, if time was never on our side. Then before I die, I want to burn out bright" (Switchfoot 00:34-00:56). These lyrics from the Switchfoot song "Burn Out Bright" speaks about the inevitable truth of death.

No one can determine when they take their last breath, as the lyrics contiunes to state that "time was never on our side" (Switchfoot 00:47-00:50) and that "our future is a question mark" (Switchfoot 01:19-01:21). It is easy to find oneself
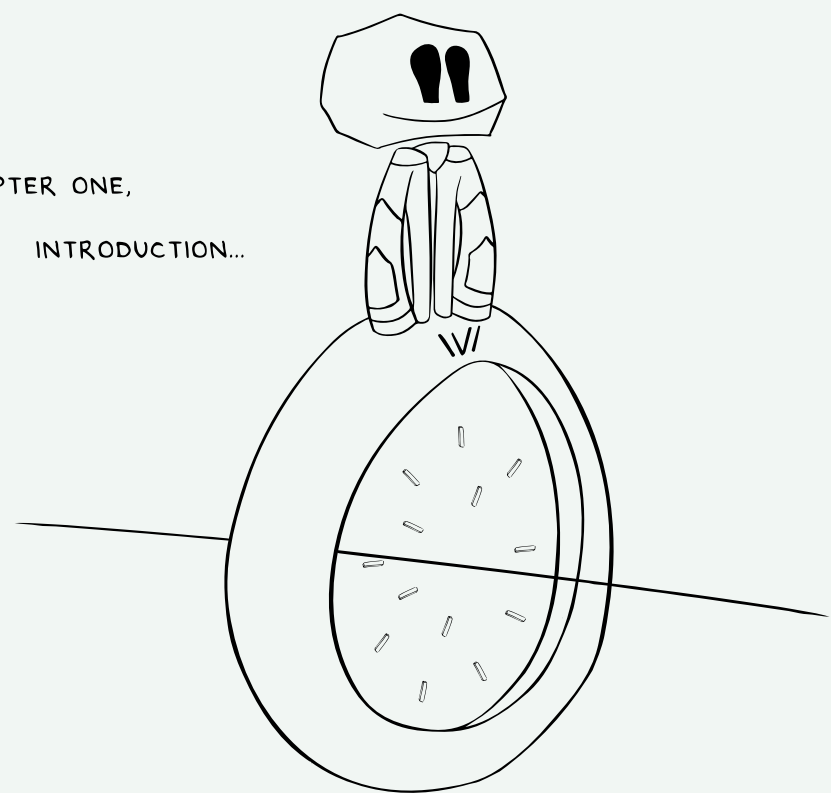
busy making plans and preparation about the future, however, one must remember that these plans and preparation are mere possibilities compared to the reality of death.

In Macau, China the casino capital of the world, the general definition of success and a good life is deeply interconnected with the worldview of materialism, which is defined as ontological materialism in this research. As most people are focused on bettering their current life, the idea of death hardly crosses one's mind nor is it seen as important.

If tomorrow is not guaranteed, is there is something beyond the current life? How does that belief determine the choices one makes?

I asked one of my friends this question, and his response was "I do not believe either way. If there is, it would not affect what I have been working on. If not, I would not need one. It is this finite life that gives us meaning to live." Most of the friends I grew up with are not followers of Christ and are identified in this research as an ontological materialist. For me to explain my decision to live with a heavenly mindset through every aspect of life has brought about many challenging yet fruitful conversations. However, most of these conversations are through reasoning and my personal experiences.

I am interested in seeing how I could help my friends understand the truth of the Gospel within their own hearts. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to answer the question of how one could hold meaningful dialogues on biblical spiritual truths, specifically regarding the importance of cultivating an eternal value system, to an audience that does not believe the existence of anything beyond the finite life.

Engaged 360 ministries, an organization specialized in evangelism training, stated in their online training course that one reason why eternal-spiritual matters do not occupy a person's mind is because one simply does not "slow down enough to reflect" (E360M, Tool #3: Create Atmospheres of Reflection) on these matters.

Furthermore, potential meaningful dialogue is inhibited by an audience that routinely rejects overtly Christian materials. Therefore, many evangelistic materials, no matter how biblical or powerful, are immediately disputed by an ontological materialist once they are labeled as "Christian." Christianity is and should not merely be arguments but should also be felt in conviction.

Therefore, this research proposes that imaginative storytelling is one of many evangelistic tools to help one "slow down and reflect" on biblical spiritual truths.

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In order to correctly present an imaginative story with biblical spiritual truth that relates and connects with an ontological materialist, this research examines a number of areas asking the following six research questions:

1. WHAT IS ONTOLOGICAL MATERIALISM AND HOW DOES IT AFFECT PEOPLE'S WORLDVIEW?

2. WHAT ARE THE REASONS TO AN ONTOLOGICAL MATERIALIST'S HOSTILITY TOWARDS SPIRITUAL TRUTHS?

3. HOW CAN MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE ON SPIRITUAL TRUTHS BE GENERATED AMONGST AN AUDIENCE THAT IS HOSTILE TOWARDS EVANGELISTIC MATERIALS THAT ARE LABELED AS "CHRISTIAN?"

4. HOW CAN STORYTELLING BE USED TO CREATE CONTEXTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF SPIRITUAL TRUTHS AMONGST AN AUDIENCE THAT SUBSCRIBES TO THE CONCEPT OF ONTOLOGICAL MATERIALISM?

5. HOW EFFECTIVE IS STORYTELLING IN GENERATING MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE IN EVANGELISM?

6. WHAT IS THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT NARRATIVE PERSUASION HAS ON AN AUDIENCE?

7. WHAT ATTITUDES DO PEOPLE HAVE ON THE IDEA OF ETERNITY, SPECIFICALLY FROM A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE AFTER DEATH?

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Firstly, this research defines ontological materialism and discusses how it affects one's worldview. Secondly, this research lays out the methods to hold meaningful dialogue on biblical spiritual truths amongst an audience that is hostile towards evangelistic materials that are labelled as "Christian." Thirdly, this research looks into the psychological impact narrative persuasion has on an audience and the effectiveness of storytelling in generating meaningful dialogue in evangelism. Lastly, a three-minute animated short demonstrates how storytelling can be used to create contextual understanding of spiritual truths amongst an audience that subscribes to the concept of ontological materialism.

Chapter 2 contains a thorough discussion on the selected thesis topic, which includes the definition of ontological materialism, effects on worldviews, methods of reaching an ontological materialist despite their hostility towards spirituals truths, ways narrative persuasion is used in storytelling, and the practical example of Jesus as a storyteller.

Chapter 3 describes the design process, articulating the plan and steps taken and the difficulties that occurred during the process. This chapter describes how the finial deliverable was created.

Chapter 4 discusses the reasons behind the chosen visual solutions, such as script writing, character design, storyboards, style frames. This chapter answers why certain choices were made as a visual solution.

Chapter 5 concludes with a summary and defense of the finial deliverable.
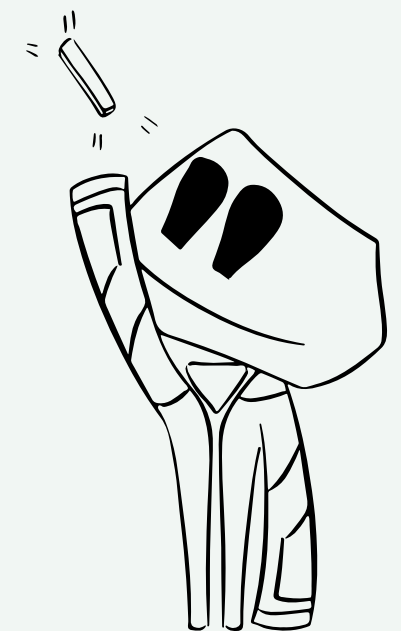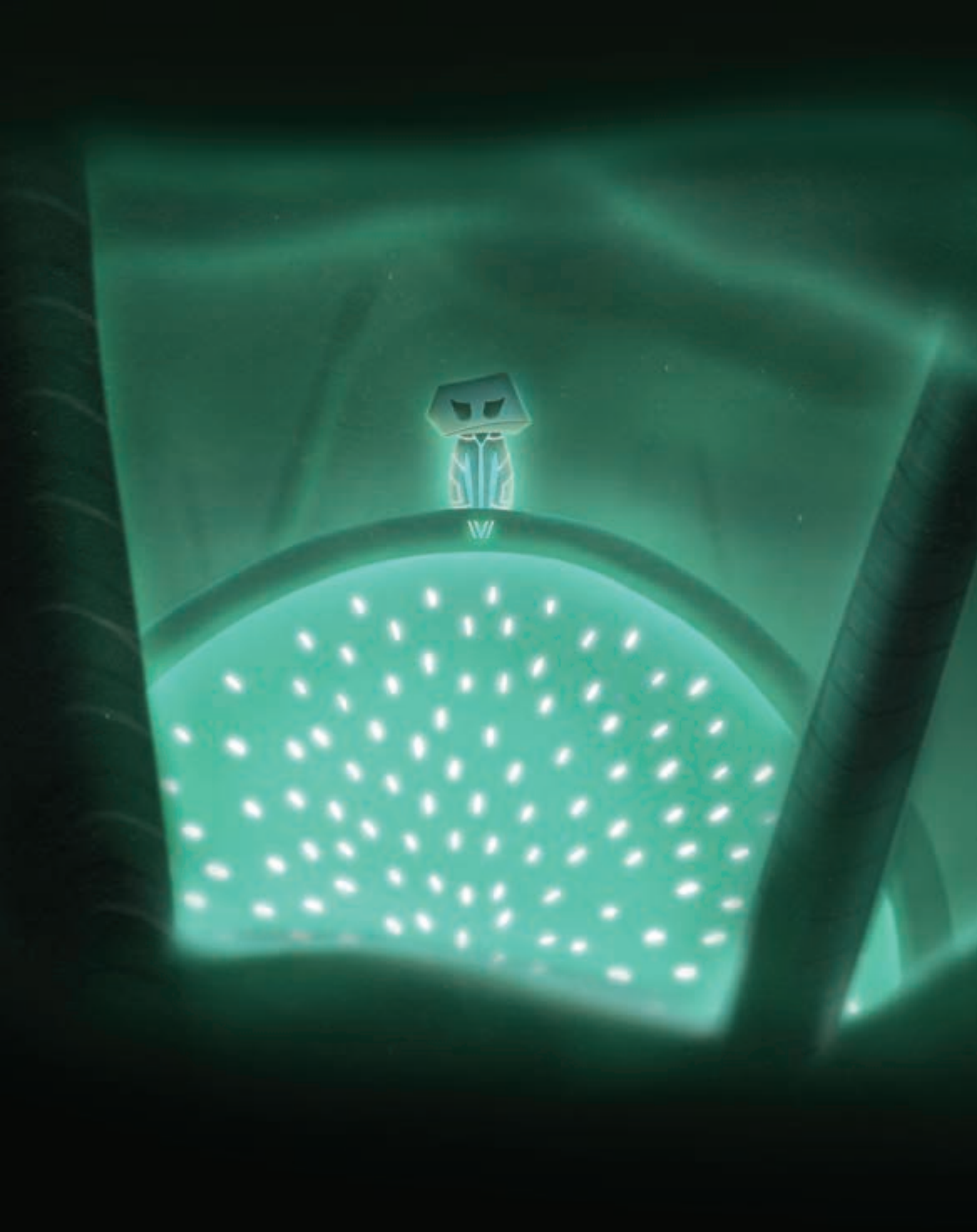
research

≫ LITERATURE REVIEW ≪

The following research first defines ontological materialism, worldviews, barriers against and methods towards evangelistic efforts, imaginative storytelling, and the psychology of narrative persuasion. This research highlights primary sources of scholarly research, revealing the value system an ontological materialist may hold, the possible reason for one's hostility towards spiritual truths, the need for pre-evangelism, and the way storytelling combines reason and imagination in a way that is effective in generating meaningful dialogue about spiritual truths found in the Bible.

ONTOLOGICAL MATERIALISM

In order to understand how ontological materialism hinders evangelistic efforts by precluding any dialogue about spiritual matters, especially regarding the importance of cultivating an eternal value system, one must first understand what ontological materialism is and why it is important for a Christian to be informed about this obstacle.

◀   RQ1.1: What is ontological materialism?   ▶

The Definition of Ontology

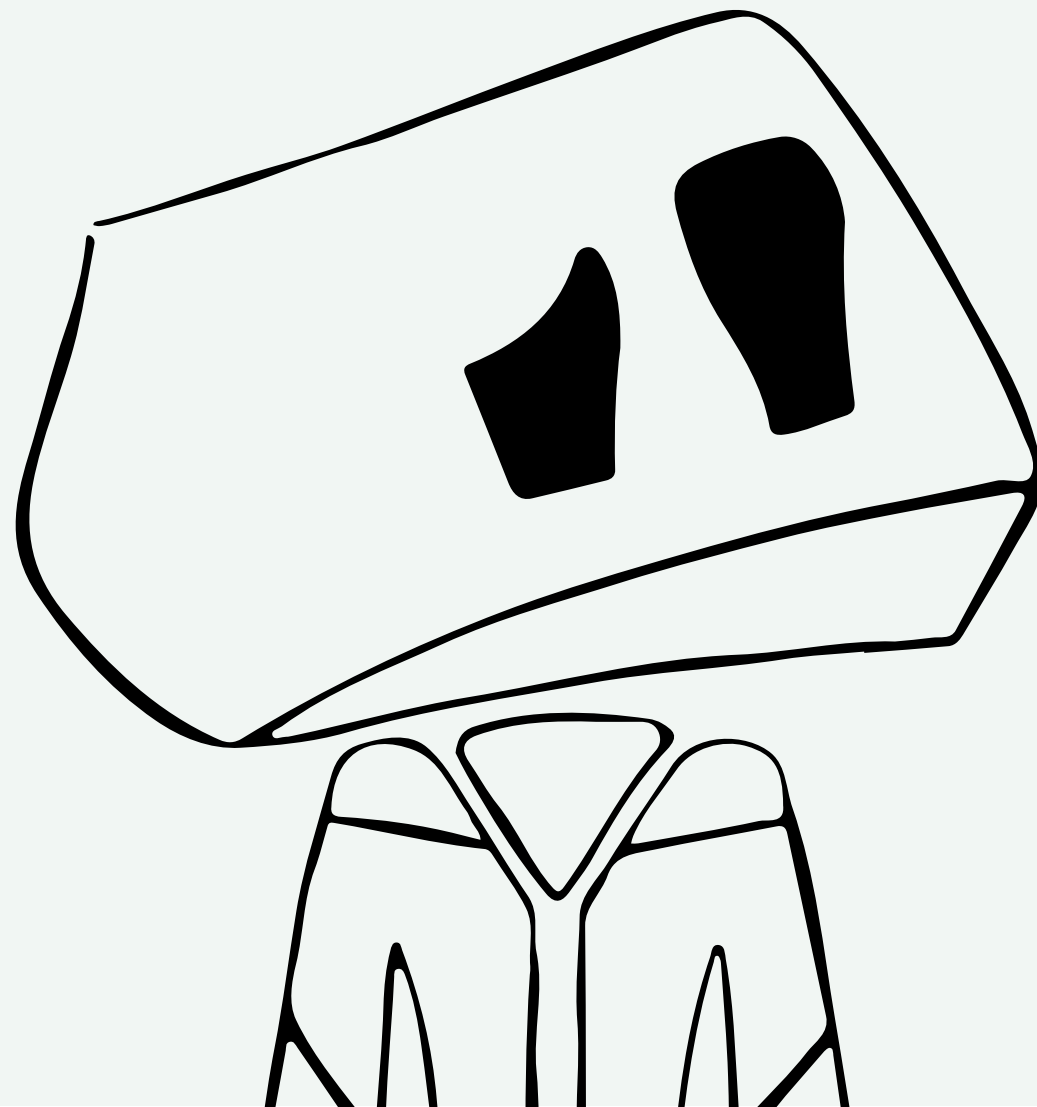Ontology is "the study of being as being. What is there?" Thus ontology is the study of existence itself; which is closely related to the study of metaphysics, which seeks to answer: What is real? (Cowan and Spiegel 146). William Hasker, an American philosopher and editor of the well-known journal *Faith and Philosophy*, stated that metaphysics is more than just studying what reality is, but what is ultimately real (14).

Each individual holds a set of metaphysical beliefs which shapes their worldviews and value systems. Christians believe earth is only our temporary home, a passing by as they look forward to eternity with Christ.

However, non-Christians most likely embrace materialism, that the physical universe is the ultimate reality (Cowan and Spiegel 8).

Define Materialism

Materialism is an old ontological category that understands the world as consisting exclusively of material entities (Crane and Mellor 185-206). Non-material phenomena are labelled as a type of "folk belief" (Churchland 67-90); thus, materialists generally dismiss the idea of life after death since all that exists is matter. Scholars suggest that Ockham's Razor, which promotes the possibility of a simpler account of reality when everything is reduced to just matter, is a good reason why one might

adopt materialism (Cowan and Spiegel 158).

C. S. Lewis, a prominent Christian apologist and writer, described in *The Problem of Pain* what he believed as the reality of a materialistic universe: an "empty space, completely dark and unimaginably cold," He continued to state that it is a reality which "all stories will come to nothing: all life will turn out in the end to have been transitory and senseless contortion upon the idiotic face of infinite matter" (13-14). Accordingly, materialism is then seen as none other than a "survival mechanism" (Crane and Mellor 164).

Our culture is so thoroughly immersed in materialism that most non-Christians do not consider "the fate of one's eternal soul" as a pressing issue (Ordway 59). They hold to the idea that "when you're dead, you're dead!" (Crane and Melor 234), therefore it is unnecessary to even presuppose the existence of any substances one cannot "directly experience" through material matters (Crane and Melor 158). Setzer understood this idea of materialism and labeled it in Science, Religion and Spirituality as "faith materialism," emphasizing the

complete exclusion of curiosity towards any non-physical phenomena.

Define Ontological Materialism

Furthermore, a materialist is determined by the way he or she thinks (Setzer). Robert L. Waggoner, a Christian evangelist and educator who focuses on contrasting biblical Christianity and secular Humanism, stated in *The Material Face of Humanism* that even if one believes in a reality beyond physical matter but directs all their energy towards investing solely on material goods for physical benefits, that person's action "denies the existence of man's spiritual nature,"Hence, they are labelled as "materialistically minded."

FOR THIS RESEARCH, ONTOLOGICAL MATERIALISM IS DEFINED AS A BELIEF, A VALUE SYSTEM AND A WORLDVIEW THAT A MATERIALISTICALLY MINDED PERSON ADHERES TO IN THEIR DAILY LIFE.

EFFECTS ON WORLDVIEW

As stated above, ontological materialism is a worldview that has a hold on many individuals. Therefore, before discussing how one's life values and choices are affected by this ontological materialistic worldview, one needs to understand what a worldview is and why it is important for a Christian to understand the worldview the other individual holds.

Define Worldview

A worldview is defined as "a comprehensive system of beliefs" that allows individuals to explain and interpret the world around them as they apply this set of related beliefs to their way of living and values (Foreman 66). G. K. Chesterton, one of the greatest writers of the 20th century, stated that it is more important to get to the core of a person and know "one's view of the universe" (Chesterton 8) than mere facts about the individual. He goes on to elaborate, saying:

> We think that for a landlady considering a lodger, it is important to know his income, but still more important to know his philosophy. We think that for a general about to fight an enemy, it is important to know the enemy's numbers, but still more important to know the enemy's philosophy. We think the question is not whether the theory of the cosmos affects matters, but whether, in the long run, anything else affects them. (Chesterton 8)

Since an individual's ultimate value, goals and decisions in life are shaped and determined by their chosen worldview, the Apostle Paul encourages believers to "Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time" (English Standard Version, Col. 4.5).

In a generation when everyone has a different set of worldviews and value systems, it will be difficult to hold a meaningful conversation with an individual unless there is a common understanding on the topic at hand. Thus, in order to be an effective evangelist, one has to understand how to tailor messages according to the needs and questions of those they meet (Foreman 93). And according to Chesterton, Christians can do so by having a thorough understanding of their "view of the universe" (Chesterton 8).

For this research, ontological materialism is a preconceived reality that holds that there is nothing above experience. It says that "the ultimate value of existence is purely physical" (de Quincey 97). It is defined as a belief, a value system, and a worldview that a materialistically minded person adheres to in their daily life.

The Ontological Materialistic Worldview

A person with an ontological materialist worldview understands that physical phenomena are the only thing that constitute existence (Setzer), and as stated before that materialism is "nothing more than a survival mechanism" (Crane and Mellor 164). Therefore, people holding this worldview tend to live their lives with the attitude that matter is the only ultimate value in life and is all there is.

Consequently, one's definition of success in life can only be measured by one's accumulated material possessions (Waggoner). We can see that this phenomenon is deeply ingrained in every aspect of society, starting with the education system. Waggoner states in *The Material Face of Humanism* that the purpose of education is to teach methods to "make a living," it is an institution that advocates materialism and rejects spiritual values. People are taught to believe that a good life must be experienced in the here and now and is gained by one's capability to securing a job and gaining wealth.

However, in Ecclesiastes the author acknowledges that if life ends at death, as the ontological materialistic worldview states, then "all is vanity and a striving after the wind" (Eccl. 1.14), a meaningless toil under the sun that holds no ultimate value.

Theistic Worldview

A theistic worldview informs one about the reality of eternity, a life beyond death (John 3:16). The Apostle Paul in the book of Philippians presents a biblical outlook on life and death, stating that "to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil 1.21). This suggests that the meaning to life is something beyond this finite life, that the meaning to life is found in Christ. Furthermore, death is unavoidable because of sin (Rom. 6.23); however, contrary to the ontological materialistic worldview, this life is only seen as a temporary home. The eternal life begins after death (2 Pet. 1.13-14).

Christians acknowledge the biblical truth that death is inevitable "and after that comes judgment" (Heb. 9. 27). This judgement determines whether or not one will spend eternity with God based on one's response to the salvation of Jesus Christ in their lifetime. For Christians, there is an urgency for salvation simply because life is short on the scale of eternity. For Christians, one is called to be in the world but not of the world; to live with the hope of eternity according to God's promises; and to live with an eternal value system

as citizens of heaven, which is beyond the comprehension of those around them. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all died in faith and did not receive what God promised them in their lifetime. They were seen as strangers and exiles on the earth because they desired "the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God" (Heb. 11.10). They lived with an eternal value system on earth and held a different perspective towards the meaning and purpose of life.

A person who holds a theistic worldview understands that the ultimate fulfilment in life cannot be satisfied with earthly possessions that are destined to pass (Matt. 6.19-20). The Apostle Paul boldly identifies earthly things, which have value in the eyes of an ontological materialist, as "rubbish". He continues to state that:

> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ. (Phili. 3.8)

Living for Christ should be the ultimate purpose in life for one who holds to a theistic worldview; this value system is inherently a different way of living and thinking and a different value system from an ontological materialist, who fails to understand why Christians are willing to "sacrifice" so much in life for a reality that cannot be "directly experienced" (Crane and Melor 158).

Nevertheless, the ontological materialistic worldview fails to grasp the importance of eternity. The idea of living with an eternal value system seems obscure to an ontological materialist, who thinks that the ultimate value in life is anchored in the finite and physical materials.
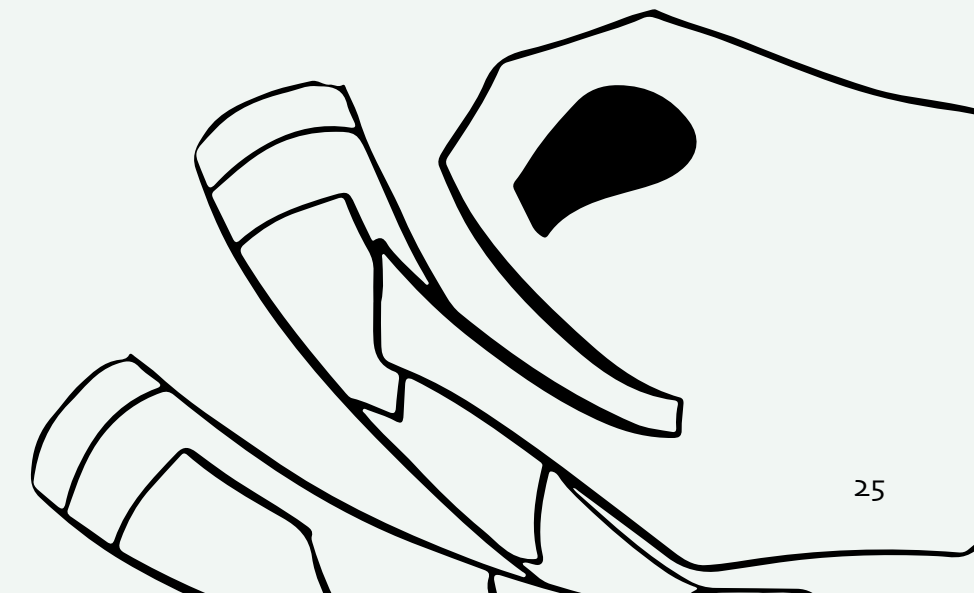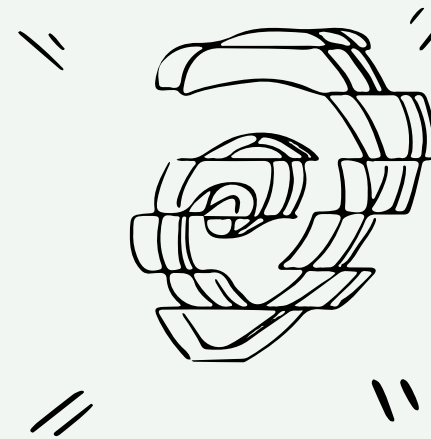
HOSTILITY TOWARDS SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

The previous literature highlighted how having an ontological materialistic worldview directly affects one's ultimate values in life and their views on eternity, however, materialists claim "any sort of religion or spiritual practice is a closed book" (Ward 1). Thus, how can one hold meaningful conversations on spiritual matters, especially the importance of cultivating an eternal value system, with an ontological materialist who routinely rejects overtly Christian materials? This next section tackles these barriers that hinder potentially meaningful dialogue and uncover the reasons ontological materialists are hostile towards spiritual truths.

◀ RQ2: What are the reasons to an ontological materialist's hostility towards spiritual truths? ▶

The Post-Christian Era

As the prevalence of Christianity has magnificently declined (Meacham, "The end of Christian America"), scholars agree that our society is heading towards a direction where the dominate religion is no longer Christianity (Yancey 71-94). Not only are the numbers of non-Christians increasing (Smith and Kim 9), but Christian influence from societal institutions and governments has also been displaced (Smith).

According to an annual survey conducted by the American Worldview inventory 2020 (AWVI), only two percent of millennials – those born between 1984 and 1998 –hold a biblical worldview. The next generation, Gen Z – those born between 1999 and 2015 – are labeled as the "post-Christian" generation.

Although Gen Zs in America are twice as much likely to identify as atheists' compared to the adult population (Barna Group par.3). Bruce Little, senior Professor of Philosophy at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, believes that atheism is still not the biggest threat to Christianity; rather, naturalism, the belief that there is nothing above experience, may be the bigger threat (Little 09:25-09:37).

Scholars call the post-Christian era the "death of God" movement where "objective truth, especially biblical truth" is no longer seen as valuable (Meacham par.9). C. S. Lewis, when speaking on this post-Christian phenomena, even favored paganism over post-Christianity, stating that at least paganism still has the idea that there is something above nature, while the post-Christian believes that there is nothing above nature or experience. According to Little, naturalism leads to the loss of the universals which leads to relativism. Richard Weaver, an American scholar and Professor of English at the University of Chicago, states in his book *Ideas Have Consequences* that:

> The denial of universals carries with it the denial of everything transcending experience. The denial of everything transcending experience means inevitably…the denial of truth. With the denial of objective truth there is no escape from the relativism of 'man the measure of all things. (Weaver 4)

Andrew Sullivan, a famous blogger and political pundit, stated that another feature of post-Christianity is that people are obsessed with progress, "a gradual ascent of mankind toward reason, peace and prosperity" (Sullivan par.7)

Little elaborates that progress not only causes one to be focused on enhancing conveniences and effectiveness, but the idea of progress is also "only interested in the future," which hinders the Gospel – a historic message (Little 15:40-20:54). Ironically, the post-Christian ontological materialist's definition of the future does not include eternal life; therefore, God is seen as both unnecessary and as "an obstruction to progress" (Little 15:40-14:51).

This idea of progress, naturalism and relativism are all within the realm of the ontological materialistic worldview mentioned previously. This ideal quest for the good life that strives for a better self and the denial of any experience above what is physically tangible puts God completely out of the picture.

IRONICALLY,
THEIR DEFINITION
OF THE FUTURE
DOES NOT INCLUDE
ETERNAL LIFE.

Rejection of the "Christian"

Statistical data reveals that the institutional church is failing in "not only the presentation of the gospel but in seeing a response to its presentation" (McKinney 2-3). The previous methods of evangelism required the targeted individuals to at least have a fundamental understanding of the existence of God, the Bible as the Word of God and abstract biblical concepts, such as like sin and holiness (MaKinney 35).

However, in this post-Christian generation that does not care about God, or have a biblical foundation of truth, the familiar way of evangelism seems less effective to them. Little suggests that people could not comprehend the Gospel because of their unfamiliarity towards the message Christians present. He argues that:

> You come to people to talk to them about a spiritual domain, a spiritual problem, a God that they can't see. And everything they hear in their culture is all naturalistically oriented. (Little 14:52-15:25)

As Weaver mentioned the denial of truth, people are becoming more and more resistant towards absolute truth; As a result, the Word of God is only known to be authoritative to those interested in it (Rock 255). Despite Christians being faithful in carrying out the Great Commission, this ontological materialistic worldview has created a hostility towards materials that are overtly "Christian."

"Christian" resources, messages, and arts have automatically been repudiated simply because they are labeled as "Christian," thus making it difficult to even generate meaningful conversations on spiritual truths if they are only addressed in "Christian" terms (Ordway 60). Additionally, the universal meanings of "Christian" phrases have changed, and they no longer mean the same between the believer and the unbeliever (Schaeffer 119). biblical terms like 'heaven', 'hell' and 'eternal life' are understood as empty slogans, nonsense to an ontological materialist (Ordway 23).

METHODS TO REACH THE POST-CHRISTIAN ONTOLOGICAL MATERIALIST

In what ways can Christians then engage the post-Christian ontological materialist with meaningful dialogues instead of empty slogans? The following literature review will cover methods such as Francis Schaeffer's pre-evangelism and C. S. Lewis's importance of combining reason and imagination to illustrate how Christians can approach the ontological materialist who routinely rejects overtly "Christian" materials.

◀ RQ3: How can meaningful dialogue on spiritual truths be generated amongst an audience that is hostile towards evangelistic materials that are labeled as "Christian"? ▶

William Blake, an English poet, stated in *VII The Everlasting Gospel* that:

> This lifes dim windows of the soul,
> Distorts the Heavens from pole to pole,
> And leads you to believe a lie,
> When you see with not thro', the eye,
> That was born in a night,
> to perish in a night,
> When the soul slept
> in the beams of light. (173-177)

The poem perfectly captures the reality of a post-Christian generation that listens with its eyes and thinks with its feelings, when the purpose of one's eyes is not merely for sight. Instead, it is "a lens for the mind to look through" (Frye 25).

Pre-Evangelism

Often the problem in evangelism is that there is a tendency to focus on the methodology rather than humanity. Little and other scholars agree that "sophisticated arguments, studies, percentages" are hard facts, however they fail to reach an individual's "understanding and circumstances" (Little 45:16- 50:17). He continues to point out that the key to evangelism is to be personal and not mechanical, to listen for understanding one's perspective and not for answering, to ask the right questions for a conversation, and to turn the question into a point of a conversation. The good news of the Gospel is unquestionable, and an individual needs to understand how it is vital for his or her life. Therefore, first talk about life and one's preconceived reality and worldview, these conversations in the end act as a foundation to begin the "believing process" in an individual (Little 45:16-50:17).

Francis Schaeffer, a distinguished evangelical theologian, introduced this concept as pre-evangelism, which is "taking the roof off" in a loving way, exposing one's preconceived reality against the reality. Schaeffer elaborates that:

> Every man as built a roof over his head to shield himself at the point of tension. At the point of tension the person is not in a place of consistency in his system and the roof built is a protection against the blows of the real world, both internal and external… the Christian, lovingly, must remove the shelter and allow the truth of the external world and of what man is, to beat upon him, when the roof is off, each man must stand-naked and wounded before the truth of what is. (Schaeffer 156)

The goal of pre-evangelism is not centered around presenting the Gospel efficiently and getting a response from the audience, instead, it is a ploughing process for the heart to be ready for the Gospel. Schaeffer in *The God Who Is There*
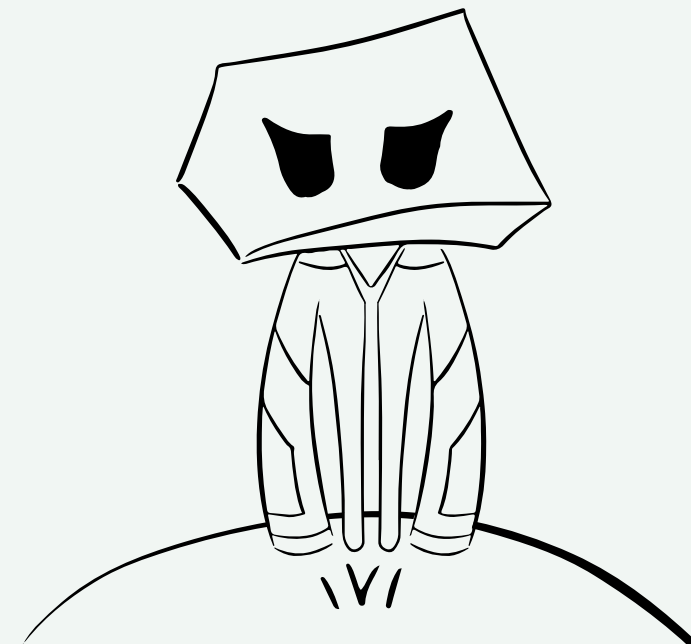
argues that "no one can become a Christian unless he understands what Christianity is saying" (154), suggesting that Christians should not approach the individual by trying to turn him from his position, but towards "the natural direction in which his presuppositions would take him." Then he will arrive at where he ought to be (127).

It is important to understand that although this approach does not lead an individual directly to the Gospel, it reveals the poverty within their preconceived worldviews when it is placed up against reality (Little 39:45-40:38). This revelation can possibly lead one to begin to appreciate and have meaningful dialogues about the Gospel (Davison and Milbank 38).

Utilizing Imaginative Storytelling in Pre-Evangelism

This discussion leads to the question of how one would engage the post-Christian ontological materialist with the approach of pre-evangelism.

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RQ4: How can storytelling be used to create contextual understanding of spiritual truths amongst an audience that subscribes to the concept of ontological materialism?

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Speaking on his own barrier towards Christianity, Lewis as an atheist and a materialist before his conversion stated that, it was not the issue of believing Christianity but to truly know what the doctrine meant (Lewis et al. 976).

As he was solely focused on the doctrines of Christianity instead of the drama of Christ's life and death, biblical spiritual truths were skimmed off the top of Lewis' mind instead of speaking to him at a deep personal level.

In his essay *Transposition*, Lewis expressed

the difficulty of "translating higher theological realities, those of heaven, into the language of lower realities, our common experiences on earth" (Sheahan 166), stating that the ultimate reality of the Christian faith cannot be fully comprehended solely through the rational faculty, which he illustrates as "a single instrument instead of a whole orchestra" (Sheahan 167). He states that

> The piano version means one thing to the musician who knows the original orchestral score and another to the man who hears it simply as a piano piece. (Lewis 100)

He then continues that if the second man who only knows the piano and denies the existence of other instruments, then he is at a even greater disadvantage. Lewis uses the example of two musician's understanding for a particular musical piece to illustrate that imaginative elements like symbols and metaphors are needed to signify things that operate on the higher level.

Storytelling and metaphorical logic are known as neural phenomenon for human beings as we are "hardwired for stories"

(Holtje 1), especially when it comes to decoding conceptual information.

According to Annette Simmons, the author of *The Story Factor*, "story is a form of mental imprint" where perceptions are shaped and the unconscious mind is touched (Simmons 29-30). It is an art form preserved in one's mind even after years have passed. Stories have the ability to break through "cultural or generation boundaries" to bring life into words (McKinney 10), allowing controversial messages to take place without immediate resistance as individuals experience "less perceived control or manipulation" through storytelling (Shen et al. 170).

This is especially true for the post-Christian oncological materialist who is immediately defensive towards materials labeled as "Christian". Lewis also expressed that a key reason why people find it difficult "to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God" is because "obligation to feel can freeze feelings" (Lewis 47).

Andrew Peterson, an American musician and novelist, stated that "If you want

IF YOU WANT SOMEONE
TO HEAR THE TRUTH...
TELL THEM THE TRUTH.

BUT,
IF YOU WANT SOMEONE
TO LOVE THE TRUTH...
TELL THEM A STORY.

- ANDREW PETERSON

someone to hear the truth, you should tell them the truth. But if you want someone to love the truth, you should tell them a story" (Smith par.3).

Understanding this idea, Lewis approached pre-evangelism with "narrative theology." His goal was to lead people to experience truths through symbols and metaphors instead of contemplating on them (Sheahan 167). This tactic allows an individual to experience and approach biblical truths in a less threatening environment.

Christianity is a story and needs to be understood as a story before being translated into "a codified doctrinal system." Michael Ward, Senior Research Fellow at Blackfriars Hall at the University of Oxford and Professor of Apologetics at HBU, comments that "doctrines are not as richly meaningful as that which they are doctrines about" (65).

By entering an imaginative world, without the label of "stained-glass and Sunday school associations," non-Christians can approach biblical truths without preconception or defensiveness, thus being

able to hear biblical stories in a new light. Furthermore, apologetic arguments are time bound, whereas symbols, stories, and characters "have an audience for all times" (Socratesinthecity 48:31-48:43). Chad Walsh, the author of *C. S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics*, emphasizes that the Christian faith was comparatively presented more eloquently and probingly in Lewis' imaginative stories than his other more forthright apologetics books (Gibb et al. 116).

Therefore, this research proposes that imaginative stories can act as one of many "estranging techniques" of pre-evangelism that help to "steal past the watchful dragons" (Lewis 47) and are able to create an enticing environment that facilitates meaningful dialogue on spiritual truths.

Reason and Imagination

This next section will unwrap the importance of good reasoning in imagination and imagination in reasoning, as Christians utilize imaginative stories as a tool for pre-evangelism.

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Imagination is necessary before the individual develops a reason for truth, this is because meaning is the antecedent condition for truth: "before something can be either true or false, it must mean" (Ward 62). In his essay *Bluspels and Falansferes*, Lewis believes that imagination, as the "organ of meaning," supplies the materials for reason to operate. "Imagination," he states, "is not the cause of truth, but its condition." (Lewis 265). Scilicet, the meaning of a word or concept could only be truly understood when a connection is made with a clear image.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, one of the most influential people of the Romantic period, calls imagination "the living power and prime agent of all human perception" that reengages the world to see the things that are there, but which reason itself is not capable of seeing (Scott Masson 18:30-31:00).

Anderson Wayne explained that although one is "actively shaping imaginatively," the meaning of the imagination has been neglected, and one has begun to only "read the world as a flat surface" (Anderson 255). This phenomenon directly corresponds to Blake's idea of "when you see with not thro the Eye." (Blake 173-177)

Lewis, in *Meditations In A Tool Shed* uses the example of 'looking at' a beam of light in a dark room from the outside and 'looking alone' the beam of light in a dark room from the inside, to explain reason and imagination as two types of cognitive experiences. He firmly believes that "an influence which cannot evade our consciousness will not go very deep" (Lewis and Hooper 142).

I was standing today in the dark toolshed. The sun was shining outside and through the crack at the top of the door there came a sunbeam. From where I stood that beam of light, with the specks of dust floating in it, was the most striking thing in the place. Everything else was almost pitch-black. I was seeing the beam, not seeing things by it.

Then I moved, so that the beam fell on my eyes. Instantly the whole previous picture vanished. I saw no toolshed, and (above all) no beam. Instead I saw, framed in the irregular cranny at the top of the door, green leaves moving on the branches of a tree outside and beyond that, 90 odd million miles away, the sun. Looking along the beam, and looking at the beam are very different experiences. (Lewis 212)

He explains the first type of consciousness as "looking at," studying something from afar with a spectator point of view, as if one is looking at the beam of light, which is all one can see. On the other hand, he calls the second type of consciousness "looking along", to step inside the beam of light and gain personal knowledge of the object being studied.

The point of Lewis' illustration is that once inside the beam, it vanishes. Instead of being one's object of vision, the beam becomes the medium of one's vision. For example, Lewis stated that the word pain is meaningless to a physiologist if he just "looks at" it by studying it, without "looking along" by personally experiencing the feeling of pain.

Lewis proposes the idea of making truth experiential by "looking along" biblical truth, rather than simply "looking at" it. While "looking at" is related to science and reason, "looking along" is related to imaginative interpretation of the reality (Sheahen 164-165). He emphasizes that while both speak truth, "looking at" could only make sense after "looking along" has occurred.

The purpose of "looking at" something through reason is to apply critical thinking to one's imaginative experience. Reason informs one "what is," whereas imagination informs one "what it means."

CONVERSION REQUIRES
AN ALTERATION
OF THE WILL... WHICH,
IN THE LAST RESORT,
DOES NOT OCCUR WITHOUT
THE INTERVENTION OF
THE SUPERNATURAL.

– C.S.LEWIS

In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis states that narrative fiction opens a doorway for spiritual dialogues that combines both reason (left-brain language) and imagination (right-brain language). Lewis invites readers to "look along" his Christian beliefs, while his apologetic literatures points readers to "look at" them (Sheahen 166).

Reason invites one to willingly engage with meaning, while imagination ignites a hunger for clarity; consequently, an integration of both modes is where "the fullest engagement with truth" is found (Ordway 164). This intergration correlates to Lewis' famous quote found in *Is Theology Poetry?* in which he states, "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risin, not only because I see it, but by it I see everything else" (Lewis 15). Nonetheless, Lewis stresses in his essay *The Decline of Religion* that,

> Conversion requires an alteration of the will, and an alteration which, in the last resort, does not occur without the intervention of the supernatural. I do not in the least agree with those who therefore conclude that the spread of an intellectual (and

imaginative) climate favourable to Christianity is useless. You do not prove munition workers useless by showing that they cannot themselves win battles, however proper this reminder would be if they attempted to claim the honour due to fighting men. If the intellectual climate is such that, when a man comes to the crisis at which he must either accept or reject Christ, his reason and imagination are not on the wrong side, then his conflict will be fought out under favourable conditions. (Lewis 182)

Lewis stated that together both reason and imagination best help serve, because ultimately "without the intervention of the supernatural," by which Lewis is referring to The Holy Spirit, then "an alteration of the will" cannot be achieved. The Apostle Paul clearly stated in the book of Ephesians that "one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4.6). It is important to remember that imaginative storytelling in itself has no power to change hearts. However, it can be one of many tools that God uses to draw people to Himself.

Experiencing Reality Through Imagination

Shaped by their worldview, the preconceived reality of an ontological materialist is that there is nothing above direct experience, however, a theistic worldview communicates otherwise. Since the ontological materialist believes that the ultimate value in life is purely physical, their way of understanding reality is also confined within that parameter. The following literature review will clearly display how imagination can be utilized for awakening the religious sense within one's mind to experience reality in its fullness (Giussani 117).

J. R. R. Tolkien, best known for *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, proposes that imagination offers the individual a renewed view of reality, arguing that fairytales have the power to help one "see things as we are (were) meant to see them" (Ordway 88) by taking the audience to a world of magic talking animals and walking trees. (Davison and Milnack 39).

Friedrich von Hardenberg, the 18th philosopher of early German romanticism who is also known as Novalis, supported Tolkien's idea by stating that everything is

revealed as a work of art and a symbol, which allows the reader to see reality with a different light (Novalis 13). It is exactly because of this richness and depth presented by the imaginative world, that ignites a desire within the reader to go further into the story, that *The Lord of The Rings* is able to open the doors to "a religious perception of life" (Davison and Milnack 40).

On the other hand, Lewis holds to the view that imagination reflects the "shape of the reality" instead of being a representation of it, stating that imagination, like "all things, in their way, reflect heavenly truth" (Vainio 6). One example where this principle can be found is in the awakening of Lewis' own imaginative capacity for understanding "holiness," in which he called "a bright shadow."

This encounter occurred years before his conversion to Christianity after reading George McDonald's *Phantastes*. Although Lewis was not able to understand the doctrinal language of "holiness," he was able to personally experience the reality reflected from that word (Ordway 32). He stated that his "imagination was, in a certain sense, baptized; the rest of me,

not unnaturally, took longer" (Davison and Milnack 146).

Ward emphasized that when one enjoys a well told story, the imaginative world is "hidden from you effectively by the fact that it is everywhere in the story" (Socratesinthecity 57:31-1:00:00).

Imagination is not a form of propaganda for Christianity that ignores the grim of reality of the world, but instead Samuel Tarlyor Coleridge, a english poet, literary critic, philosopher and theologian, states in agreement with Tolkien and Lewis, it is used to awaken and bring attention to the mind "from the lethargy of custom" and to remove "the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude" (Roberts 208). However, referencing Scriptures Coleridge continues, "we have eye, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand" (Roberts 208).

Therefore, imaginative storytelling is an effective method in presenting the individual with other possible realities and persuading them to willingly "inhabit the alternative world" (Davison xiii). In the context of generating meaningful dialogue

with an ontological materialist, imaginative storytelling is able to present and invite an individual to taste and see, to explore "a vision of the world where Christianity is true, but not explicit; experienced, but not contemplated" (Sheahen 167).

Research reveals that narrative persuasion has positive impacts on the individual by promoting attitude and behavioral change (Shen 166). It is also known that significant behavioral change is "assimilated in experience" (Resendes 30). Narratives have the ability to present a "sensory experience" in one's mind (Wright 44) by allowing the individual to be transported into the story and identify with the characters.
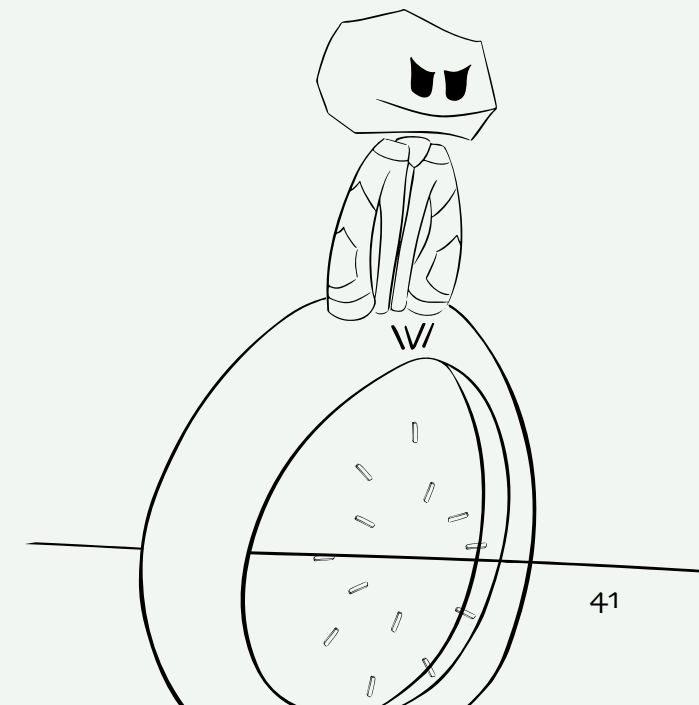
NARRATIVE PERSUASION IN STORYTELLING

The previous literature not only displayed the importance of imaginative storytelling in the context of pre-evangelism, but additionally highlighted how storytelling has the power to persuade an individual to rethink their pre-conceived realities. As stated earlier, the "obligation to feel can freeze feelings" (Ordway 39-40). Therefore, the following literature attempts to lay out the psychological impact of storytelling, specifically how narrative persuasion functions in storytelling.

◄ RQ6: What is the psychological impact narrative persuasion has on an audience? ►

Transportation

Many people have experienced the feeling of "being lost in a book," as if one were taken into the world of the story. This idea of immersing oneself in the narrative is known as transportation (Shen 168), which has been defined as "an integrative melding of cognition" (Green and Brock 719) where individuals bring in personal experience, real-world backgrounds, and goals, while being "active processors" (Green 101) as they interpret and attempt to make sense of the story.

Keith Oatley, author and director of the cognitive science program at the University of Toronto, states that while an individual engages in the story, it is as if he or she is "an unobserved observer in scenes of the lives of characters in the story world" (Oatley 445).

Scholars suggest that in order for the individual to fully focus on the narrative, not only does the individual decrease self-awareness and converge to the story, but their beliefs also become relatively more "susceptible" to the narrative story during transportation (Dahlstrom 304).

Individuals are not only more willing to accept assertions presented by the narrative, but even tend to "utilize them to answer questions about the world" (Dohlstrom 304).

Narratives has power over how one perceives the world, as it "mirrors everyday thought" by presenting the thought process behind decisions and intentions of the characters in the story (Dahlstrom 303).

Identification

Furthermore, Melanie Green, chair of the department of communication at the Ohio State University, proposed that after being transported. The individual begins to create an affinity with the characters in the story by stepping into the mind of people they are not, the individual begins perceiving the story from the character's perspective by adopting their belief system, perceived goals and values.

This internalization of the narrative promotes the individual to understand the message as important to their own lives and experiences (Shen 169).

Characters who are identified by first person pronouns, such as "self" or "I" and "whose inner consciousness is represented" do not only create a stronger identification with the individual but also simulate the transportation experience even further (Green 100).

This is known as the I-SELF model, which "allows reader to emotionally be transported" (Green 100) into the story. Green presents the idea that the individual will begin to see the story from "the perspective of the protagonist and experiences the same emotions as the protagonist" (Green 100).

Jonathan Cohen, professor at the Department of Communication at Haifa University, points out that identification is the most powerful form of connection an individual can have with a character's goals. He defines identification as

> A process that consists of increasing loss of self-awareness and its temporary replacement with heightened emotional and cognitive connections with a character (Cohen 251).

Therefore, transportation and identification together reduce resistance toward persuasive messages found in the narrative by immersing the individual in the story, making it more personal and realistic (Green 100).

Although the persuasion experienced through narrative might seem temporary, its effects continue even after the story itself (Green 101). Nonetheless, the most convincing evidence of narrative persuasion is found from the human brain. Studies found that compared to other types of "linguistic or syntactical construction," the majority of the brain was stimulated only "during the sharing of an intelligible story" (Changeux and Ricoeur, 2000). Thus, it is evident that "imagination is truly thought-provoking" (Lehnen 11)

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE:
JESUS AS A STORYTELLER

It has been established through previous literature that imaginative storytelling is effective in breaking through hostility to generate meaningful dialogue with an ontological materialist. Richard Jensen, an American theologian and professor of homiletics emeritus at the Lutheran School of Theology, stated that "Storytelling and gospel-telling are inextricably wrapped up with one another" (Jensen 126) and the greatest example of an imaginative storyteller and evangelist is Jesus Christ Himself.

Eugene Peterson, pastor, scholar, author, and poet, stated in his book *Leap Over a Wall: Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians* that stories are "the Holy Spirit's literary genre of choice" (Peterson 3). Not only does over half of the Bible contain stories (Steffen 150), 27% of Jesus' teachings were parables (Dillon 181). In fact, the book of Matthew indicates that Jesus never spoke to crowds without parables, and that "this was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13.35).

Ward states that Jesus uses a somatic method of teaching that asks questions but does not supply the answers (Socratesinthecity 31:48-32:01), intentionally hiding His message. He states that this action is in fact an act of love that prompts the hearers to draw near to God in their own timing because Jesus "wants a respond of love and not a respond of submission" (Wheatoncollege 53:06-53:56).

However, another reason why Jesus used parables in His teachings is because His message "blinds, deafens, and hardens" (Southeastern Seminary 19:35-19:45). God harden people's hearts because they "refused to love the truth" (2 Thess. 2.10-12).

Furthermore, Jesus' parables are a "metaphorical comparison" (Sider 455)

between everyday life experiences and divine abstract truths about the Kingdom of God. By drawing examples from ordinary life experiences, the Holy Spirit is able to help individuals recall lessons of truth through their surroundings, days and even years after the parable was told (Resendes 18).

Jesus Himself began a parable in Luke with, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it?" (Lk. 13.18). This verse clearly shows that parables are not simply told for entertainment but are purposefully crafted "to teach spiritual truths by way of comparison" (Resendes 18).

Simon Kistemaker, New Testament scholar and professor at Reformed Theological Seminary, states in his article "Jesus as Storyteller: Literary Perspectives on the Parables" that

> By using open-ended parables, Jesus drew His listeners into real-life situations and presented them with the need for a decision on their parts...All in all, the parables of Jesus were in a category all their own and

were quite distinct from other parabolic teachings in their timelessness and universality (Kistemaker 71).

The majority of Jesus' parables are open-ended and filled with questions. Instead of bringing His listeners to a solid conclusion. Jesus challenged His listeners to continue to ponder, to slow down and think about the meaning behind the parables.

Although Jesus' parables are to be short stories, they are descriptive with "story elements such as characters, action, dialogue, an introduction, conflict, and resolution" (Resendes 17). John Walsh, founder of BibleTelling, an organization dedicated to using Bible stories for evangelism and discipleship, stated that stories are descriptive for the purpose to "get people into the story where they will experience the heart of it" (Walsh 73).

Jesus engaged His listener by "creating an experience in the imagination" (Resendes 44), and then He challenges them to make a decision.

In the same way, imaginative storytelling is able to draws an ontological materialist to experience reality instead of their preconceptions. Jesus used parables to tap into the inmost place of an individual's mind and intentionally established "new streams of thought," pointing them to a new reality: "the reign of God" or "the Kingdom of God" (Paul 95).

As Jesus Christ Himself used short stories to present biblical spiritual truths to people with a materialistic worldview, followers of Christ can engage the world with imaginative storytelling.
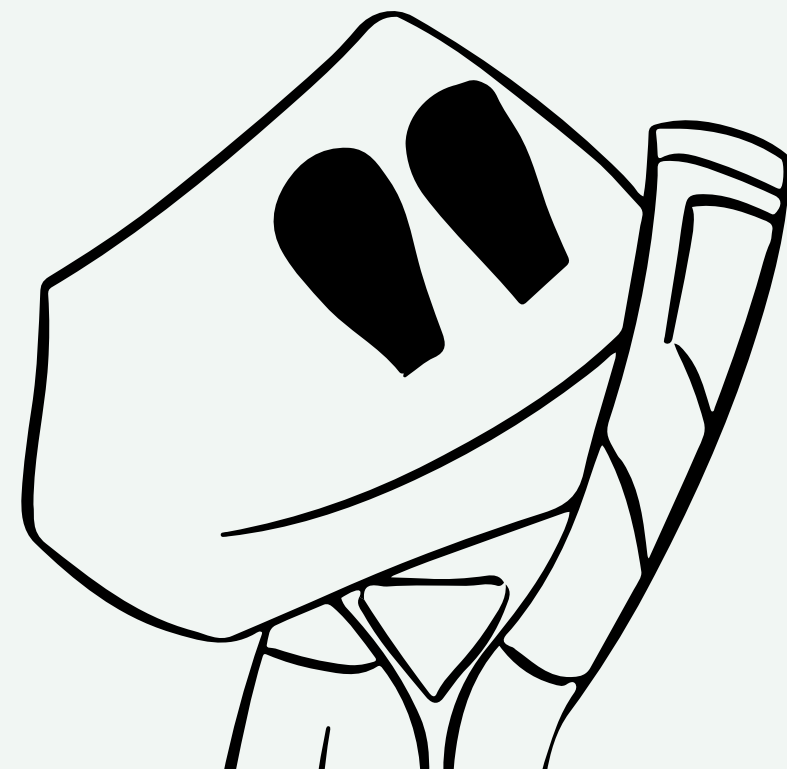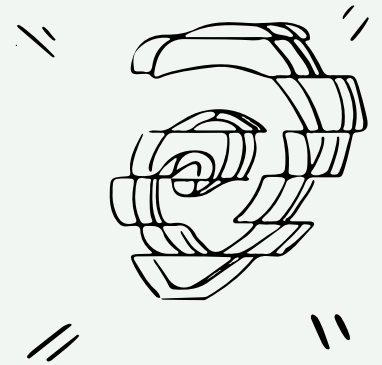
≫ VISUAL ANALYSIS ≪

The following visual analysis observes four existing Christian artists and organizations to understand how imaginative storytelling as means of pre-evangelism and the Gospel presentation are being implemented through visual media. Furthermore, this research analyzes the effectiveness of these materials for evangelism through their visual and content presentations.
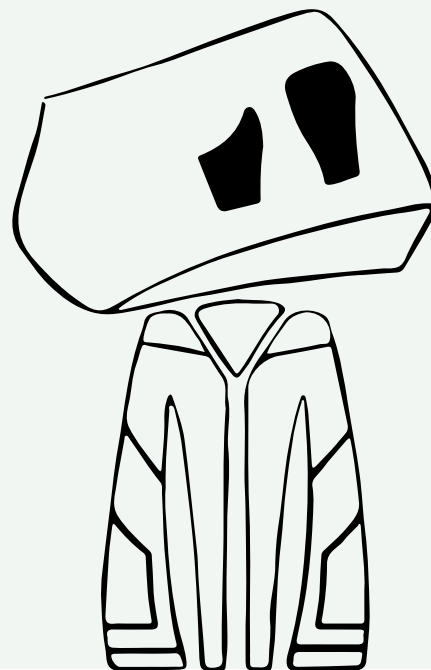
1. BIBLEPROJECT

BibleProject was founded by Timothy Mackie and Jonathan Collins in 2014. It is a crowdfunded animation studio that produces short, animated videos, podcasts, blogs, classes, and other Bible resources to explore the Bible as a unified story. Offering educational resources completely free to the public, their mission is to make the biblical story accessible to anyone, anywhere (Bible Project).

They have a broad target audience, aiming to reach people from every background and belief. Their content is broad but seems to lean towards an audience with an existing biblical foundation who is seeking to grow in their walk with the Lord.

This visual analysis focuses on how BibleProject uses storytelling for evangelism, namely, how they utilize short, animated videos as tools for evangelism and presenting biblical truths.

Many of their videos take a direct approach by laying out biblical truths through non-conceptual visuals that are complemented by clear explanation style narratives between two speakers, Timothy Mackie and Jonathan Collins, as they go back-and-forth with questions to discuss the particular topic presented in the video. BibleProject allows viewers to comprehend complicated biblical truths through a visually appealing approach by incorporating storytelling and various media effects, such as sound and motion graphic.

BibleProject has a varied style of animated videos that appeal to different audiences, from vector-based motion graphics, to digitally painted scenes, to whiteboard animations. In focusing on 2D animation instead of 3D animations, they are able to create professional standard "Christian" materials that could compete against the quality produced by well-known secular animation companies. Their average video length is around 5 minutes long. All their videos are realistically based, in which their characters resemble human figures. The worldbuilding closely resembles the reality.

This is because BibleProject is focused on doing clear explainer videos instead of a utilizing conceptual storytelling as an evangelism tool.

BibleProject holds a significant place in my heart since God used them to ignite within me a new passion for evangelism through animation and storytelling. Researching their narrative storytelling, animation styles and technical animation methods is beneficial for my project deliverable; however, since BibleProject's content is undoubtedly labeled as "Christian" material, non-Christians will unlikely be willing to consume their content unless one is on the search for truth.

Therefore, the main takeaway from BibleProject is that in order to achieve Francis Schaeffer's pre-evangelism, the research deliverable should utilize imaginative storytelling instead of an explainer video that provides the viewers with a direct answer. The deliverable will end with asking the audience a question that one must continue to ponder on after the animation is over.

2. JESUS FILM PROJECT

Jesus Film Project was founded by Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, in 1981. It is an evangelical organization that strives to share the story of Jesus by bringing Christ-centered videos to everyone, everywhere, in every language. Having over 30 films, both short videos and feature length films. Their goal is to give people an oppourity to "experience Jesus in their own language using media tools and momentum-building strategies" (Jesus Film Project), stating on their website that,

> When people come face-to-face with Jesus—when they see him smile, when they hear him speak in their own language, with their own accent—they are forever changed. We believe movies offer the most dynamic way to hear and see the greatest story ever lived (Jesus Film Project).

Jesus Film Project has partnership with 1,500 ministries worldwide, and has reached and impacted more than 500 million lives to make the decision to follow Jesus. Their main ministry is bringing the "JESUS" film, which has been translated to over 1,800 languages to places in the world that has never heard about the Gospel. The Guinness Book of World Records has even recognized the "JESUS" film has the "Most Translated Film" in history ("Most Translated Film").

Furthermore, they also have a glowing library of movies and short films as evangelistic tools, both animated and live action. Interestingly, most of the animations are used as direct Gospel presentations, while the live action videos are more conceptualized stories that act as conversation starters. All of these videos are created with the intention of being played in a small group setting where follow up questions would be presented to further engage the audience, encouraging them to ponder on the topic at hand.

Since the proposed deliverable for this research is an animated short, the following visual analysis will focus on how the Jesus Film Project uses animations for evangelism.

They have three animated collections, *Do You Ever Wonder..?, Retelling the Good Story* and *File Zero.* Two out of the three collections, *Do You Ever Wonder...?* and *Retelling the Good Story* are 2D animations, while *File Zero* is a 3D animated series. Their average video length is around 3 to 5 minutes long. Each collection is not only based on a spiritual theme and a scripture reference, but also includes small group discussion questions that immediately engage the audience. The goal for these collections is to share the Gospel using a method that is relevant to the current generation.

Do You Ever Wonder..? took the approach of using a POV (point-of-view) animation style, where the audience is looking through the eyes of the main character while interacting with different events in the animation. This collection also engages the audience with a narration style that invites the audience

to engage and be a part of the animation. These animations begin with a question, for example "Doesn't it feel sometimes as if the world is broken? As if something is not right," or "Have you ever wondered why followers of Jesus believe...." By asking a question, the narrator challenges the audiences to reach for answers, making them emotionally involved with the story. The animation proceeds to point them to Jesus as the answer to their questions. The collection is translated into eleven different languages and is composed by four videos that are each under 3 minutes.

On the other hand, *Retelling the Good Story* took the approach of storytelling to draw the audience in instead of engaging them with questions. It was a clear and direct Gospel presentation, retelling the story of Jesus through the eyes of Native Americans. This collection is composed by three videos that are each under 6 minutes.

File Zero is Jesus Film Project's only 3D animation, with a fictional storyline where a band of hackers journey to search for truth and meaning in a post-apocalyptic world by going into the computer system back into the time when Jesus was on earth, thus interweaving the direct Gospel message with a modern imaginative storyline. The series is translated into nine different languages and is composed by fourteen episodes that are each under 5 minutes.

The overall graphic style for the 2D animations were similar to the BibleProject, which are industry standard. However, the 3D animation may be inadequate to attract non-Christians who have been brought up in an era where the Walt Disney Animation Studios and the Pixar Animation Studios are known as the standard for 3D animations.

Nevertheless, all three collections are straightforward Gospel presentations, created with the goal of being active evangelism materials used in small group discussions.

There are three main takeaways from Jesus Film Project. Firstly, a 3D animation could easily fall short of viewers expectations when it does not meet industry standards.

Therefore, the deliverable for this research will focus on 2D animation rather than 3D animation. Secondly, both the Bible Project and Jesus Film Project produced videos that are 3 to 5 minutes long, this reveals that the average person will more likely be willing to watch thought provoking animations that do not require an extended amount of time. Thirdly, a narrative style of storytelling draws the individual into the story, as stated in previous research.

3. PATROL

Patrol was founded by Eleazar Ruiz, Rommel Ruiz and Bekah Ruiz in 2018. It is an illustration studio with a focus on writing fiction and non-fiction stories inspired by the Bible and presenting them through well-written stories and visually appealing illustrated books. Their goal is to use their "God-given imaginations" to present biblical truths to both Christians and non-Christians alike (Patrol).

The following visual analysis will focus on how Patrol uses storytelling for evangelism. Patrol understands that it could be hard to comprehend biblical truths and that people are drawn to stories and captivating illustrations.

They currently have three fictional resources that present biblical truths in a conceptual manner that engages the audience's reason and imagination through visual imagery and poetic narrative. They have five non-fictional resources that are considered direct Gospel presentations and educational resources. They do not have a consistent style across their work, since each book is illustrated by a different artist. One of Patrol's more prominent fictional resource is *Golly's Folly*.

Golly's Folly is based on the book of Ecclesiastes that uses a narrative storytelling method to depict how the young prince searches for satisfaction in power, riches, knowledge, and pleasure outside of the love of his father, the King. This story reflects the biblical truth that humans cannot find true satisfaction outside of Christ. Patrol presented this biblical truth through the estranging technique while engaging with the audience in a playful manner.

Moreover, through humanoid characters, which are non-human creatures, unique worldbuilding, and vibrant contrasting colors and shape language, Patrol created an otherworldliness that invites readers to explore the world of the story and gave them an opportunity to experience being transported to a different world. *Golly's Folly* is presented through the art style that is age fitting for both young and old.

Although Patrol claims that these resources are for people of all ages, they have listed *Golly's Folly* for the age range of four to ten years old, which is the driving force behind their writing style and illustration style in general. Patrol is mainly focused on creating tangible books, which narrows down the range of people they could potentially reach to only those who purchase the physical book.

The main takeaway from Patrol is the use of humanoid characters and unique worldbuilding to create an otherworldliness environment. This entices the individual to approach the imaginative world with curiosity, allowing them to be transported to the imaginative word and identify with the character's experience.

4. KENDU FILMS

Kendu Films was founded by Davy Liu in 2004. It is a company that seeks to produce "wholesome family content" through creating stories of faith, to inspire people to experience life through the eyes of faith (Kendu Films).

Liu was the first Asian animator for the Walt Disney Animation Studios. He was involved in producing scenes for well-known animations such as *The Lion King*, *Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin,* and *Mulan*. He realized that the films he was involved in creating at the Walt Disney Animation Studios were lacking the message of hope found in Christ. In an interview with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, he stated that, "there were no wholesome and high-quality films that represented the story of Christ" (Bailey).

However, God gave him a passion to use his skills, experience, and talent to share the Gospel through innovative storytelling with children in mainstream media that does not just "sit in church bookstores" (Bailey).

He stated that,

> God showed me how I can translate the Bible so the King of kings can go beyond *The Lion King*. (Bailey)

The following visual analysis will focus on how Kendu Films uses animations and storytelling for evangelism. The most prominent storytelling production from Kendu Films is *The Invisible Tails* series.

The Invisible Tails is a twelve-story series that depicts Bible stories from an animal's perspective. It is aimed to be completed over a twelve-year time span. The first five books, *The Giant Leaf, Fire Fish, Jordan's Guest, The Royal Feast* and *Enchanted Tree* have already been published.

The Giant Leaf is a story of faith, inspired by the story of Noah's Ark, depicting how animals discovered Noah's Ark and their journey to the Ark with a "leaf" of faith.

Fire Fish is a story of prayer, inspired by the story of the parting of the Red Sea from the perspective of fish to communicate the concept of prayer to children as these little fishes "call on the fin maker" in their time of need.

Jordan's Guest is a story of purpose and destiny, depicting the story of the sacrifice of Christ from the perspective of barn of animals celebrating that animal sacrifices are no longer necessary.

The Royal Feast is a story of character, depicting the book of Daniel form the perspective of a lion cub that was inspired by Daniel.

Enchanted Tree is a story of beauty, depicting the story of Eden through the eyes of a platypus being tempted by the sunbird.

The Invisible Tails is an example of how one can look along well-known biblical stories through the eyes of animals. This allows the viewers to appreciate these well-known biblical stories in a new light, engaging their imagination and biblical truths from a different perspective.

Davy Liu had a long history working in the Walt Disney Animation Studio and other mainstream entertainment studios; therefore, the art style of The Invisible Tails is cinematic and enticing. However, the font choices appear to have fallen short and does not match the level of work of the paintings.

Kendo Films have proven that imaginative stories inspired from the Bible are welcomed by individual's hostile towards materials labeled as "Christian." *The Invisible Tails* is recognized by the Chinese government, and even won the best children's book award in China in 2016 despite being based on biblical stories.

≫ QUALITATIVE PRIMARY RESEARCH ≪

This research will benefit from qualitative primary research through implementing open-ended surveys with the researcher's non-Christian friends. The purpose of this research is to provide the final deliverable with solid tangible research specifically on the seventh research question: What attitude do people have on the idea of eternity, specifically from a biblical perspective about life beyond death?

This process occurs prior to the development of the story concept, to ensure that the final delivered project correctly addresses how post-Christian ontological materialists perceive the ultimate value of life and their attitude towards life beyond death. This qualitative primary research surveyed ten individuals the following five questions; participants are non-Christians between the age of twenty and thirty.

The goal of the survey questions is to understand one's perspective and not to give an answer. In Chesterton's words, the goal is to understand one's "view of the universe" (Chesterton 8). This allows the finial deliverable to ask the right questions and turn those questions into a point of conversation.

RQ7: What attitude do people have on the idea of eternity, specifically from a Biblical perspective about life beyond death?

◄ ►

1. What are you spending the majority of your time on? How does investing time into that activity benefit you?

Respondents stated that they spend the majority of their time on work and gaining more knowledge in order to "benefit my career" and "to upgrade my social status." They emphasized that working allows one "to do what I want" in life and provides "a sense of fulfillment every single day".

2. What is your attitude towards death? Do you talk about it? Do you fear it?

Most of the respondents stated that there is a fear towards death, however, it is not because of what might happen after death but the fact that one will be "facing death without fully attaining one's goals and achievements," though there is a fear towards death, it is not a topic that is being brought up in conversations since one is "too busy to live life". It is also interesting to see that most respondents are not afraid of their own death, but the death of a loved one.
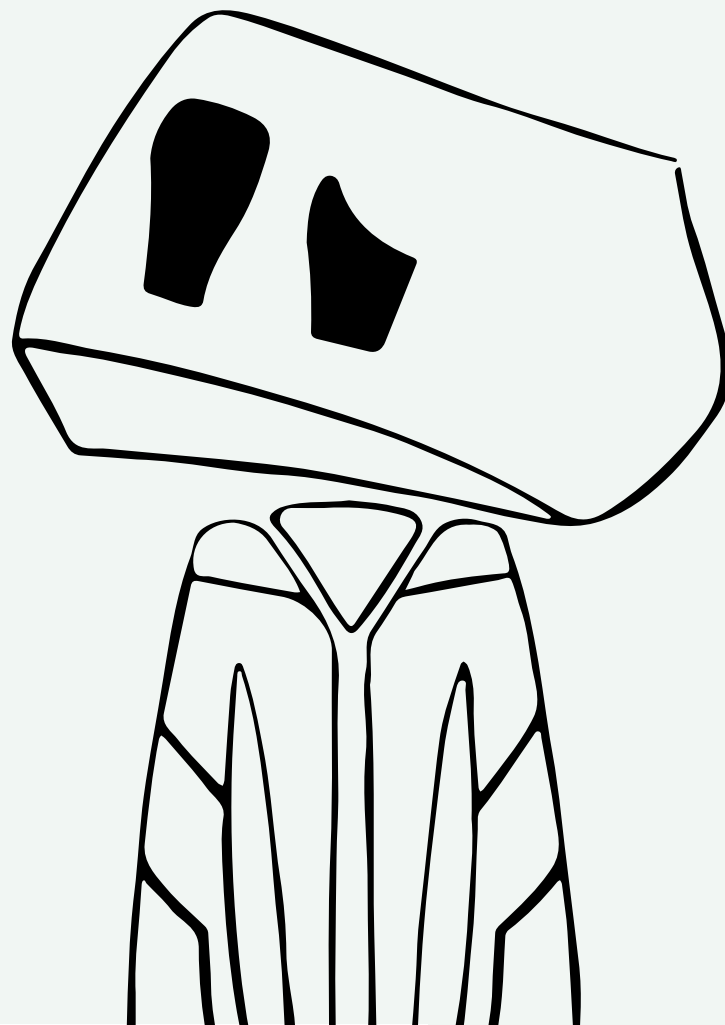
3. Do you believe that there is something beyond the current life? How does that belief determine your choices?

Half of respondents did not believe that there is anything beyond the current life, stating that "it's the finite life that gives us meaning to live," holding the attitude that it is more important to "live in the moment" and that anything beyond the current life is incomprehensible. On the other hand, the other half does believe in afterlife, and that even though there is a cause-and-effect relation between the current life and the afterlife, one respondent stated that "I don't see how that orientation is impacting my choices in daily life all that much."

4. No one can determine when their last breath is. If you knew, how would you live your life differently? Would your ultimate value in life still matter, remain the same, or be different?

All respondent stated that if they knew when their last breath is, their ultimate value in life wound remain the same: "Same values, to experience as much as I can in life." The ultimate purpose echoes questions one and two, that death is not seen as a mystery but an end to all existence. Not one mentioned the idea of existence beyond death, the focus is still on the current life.

5. What is your ultimate value in life? Where do you find the meaning of life?

Most respondents indicated that it is important to "live your life and to be the master of your life," that being true to oneself and others and making a positive influence in the world is where one finds ultimate meaning in life.

⩾ FINDINGS ⩽

Findings from the visual analyses shows that two out of four resources produced by Christian artists and organizations are easily labeled as "Christian" materials, instead of implementing imaginative storytelling that invites non-Christians to approach without hostilities towards the message.

Kendu Films and Patrol are the only two examples in this visual analysis that do recognize the impact and power of imaginative storytelling as conversation starter for pre-evangelism. On the other hand, the aesthetics and depth of the content produced by companies that utilize imaginative storytelling are mostly aimed towards kids and fail to capture the interest of young adults between ages twenty and thirty.

Findings from the qualitative primary research reflected how post-Christian ontological materialists perceive the ultimate value of life and their attitude towards life beyond death. Results from this primary research would guide the writing of the narrative storyline for the finial deliverable, which would be further discussed in Chapter 4.

Additionally, this research fails to find imaginative stories that address the concept of ontological materialism and the importance of having an eternal value system. Therefore, the final deliverable for this research will attempt to create an imaginative story that is age appropriate for young adults ages between twenty to thirty, which addresses the hopelessness of living life with an ontological materialist mindset.

To summarize the above research, ontological materialism is a worldview that is deeply rooted in the heart of many, causing one to neglect the importance of cultivating an eternal value system. Barriers such as the post-Christian era and its hostility towards overtly Christian materials can be solved by utilizing imaginative storytelling as one of many pre-evangelism approach. Although the ultimate purpose of this approach might not lead one directly to believe in the reality of eternity, it could ignite a meaningful conversation that encourages non-Christians to start thinking about a possible reality outside of their own belief systems.
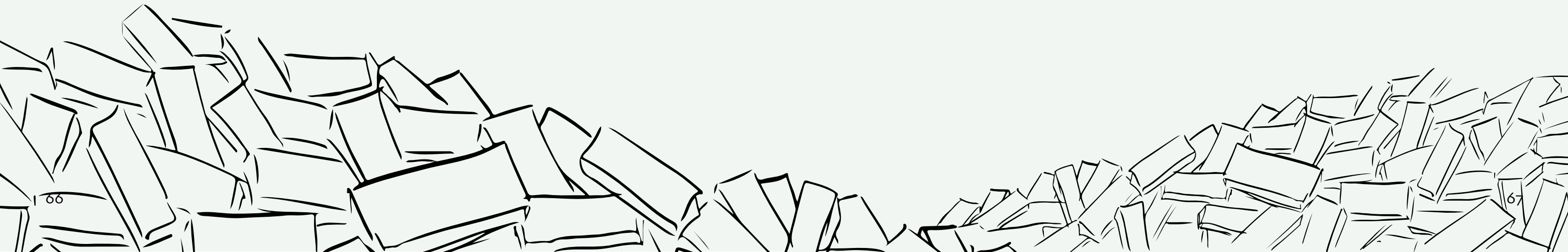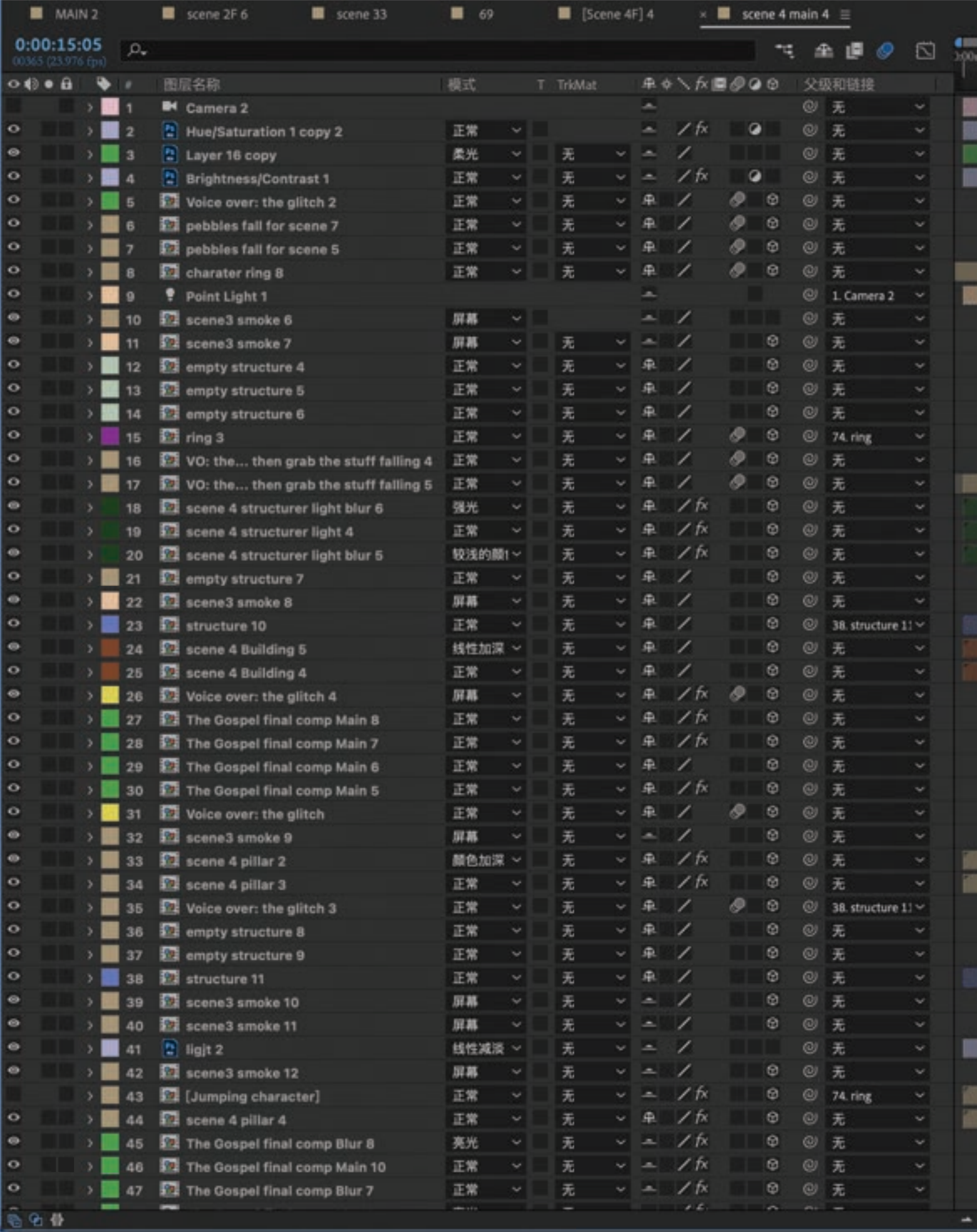
≫ CHAPTER THREE

visual process

VISUAL PROCESS

The following information explains the visual process, the animation pipeline, and techniques to produce a 2D animation project. The first stage is the pre-production process, which includes concept development, story structure, script writing, character design, world building, storyboarding and previsualization. The second stage is the production process, which includes animations for assets, camera movements, scene transition, character rigging, character animation, and the recording of narration. The third stage is the post-production process. This is the final stage of compositing everything together, including background music composition and the rendering of the final animation.

CHAPTER THREE,

VISUAL PROCESS...

STEP ONE: PRE-PRODUCTION

It is important to note that the pre-production process for an animated short is the most time consuming and the most labor-intensive part of the visual process. However, having a thorough and solid plan is vital and has proven to save "enormous expense of time, energy and money when it comes to produce your work" (Lambert 26).

Concept Development

After having a thorough understanding of the worldview and belief system of an ontological materialist, I've identified that the central idea for the finial deliverable is to inform individuals that: Life is short, and one is not guaranteed tomorrow. If death comes today, and the biblical truth of eternity is real, is one spending time chasing after things without an eternal value? As I considered how to convey this concept through narrative storytelling, I started brainstorming with different word clouds, drawing inspiration from song lyrics and Bible verses related to the topic of life and death. This step was important in narrowing down the main concept before I begin to develop the script for the animated shot (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Story Structure

Through exploring different words and ideas, I eventually narrowed down a general concept: "If life were a game, does the person with the most points win in the end?" I then was able to make plans for the story plot and story beats, which determined the general flow of the imaginative story. The decision was made to take a non-linear storytelling approach instead of the traditional three-act story structure. While referencing the Nonlinear Story Structure chart from Animated Storytelling: Simple Steps for Creating Animation & Motion Graphics, I chose to follow the "book ending" nonlinear story structure, in which the story ends exactly where it began (Blazer 29). It is crucial during this stage of planning to determine the length of the animated shot before the script writing process. After referencing video lengths from the BibleProject and the Jesus Film Project, I decided the final deliverable was to be a three-minute animation.

Script Writing

I then expanded on the specific concept through script writing and simultaneously sketching out different ideas (Figure 2).

Walt Disney once stated, "at our studio we don't write our stories, we draw them" (onstageDisney). Storyboarding is an explorative process that provides the opportunity to experiment with different visual directions to create an imaginative story that relates and connects with an ontological materialist. I asked different questions during this process to ensure that the script accurately addressed the research problem and survey response from the primary research.

This process solidified the general concept to a specific direction. The final title is The Glitch, which revolves around the concept that characters in a video game are attempting to gather as many points as possible to win before they glitch. With this new direction, I drafted a rough script idea for the three-minute animated short that follows the story beat and basic plot that was laid out previously. This process was not smooth and required multiple revisions and refining across several months before finalizing the script for the animated short.
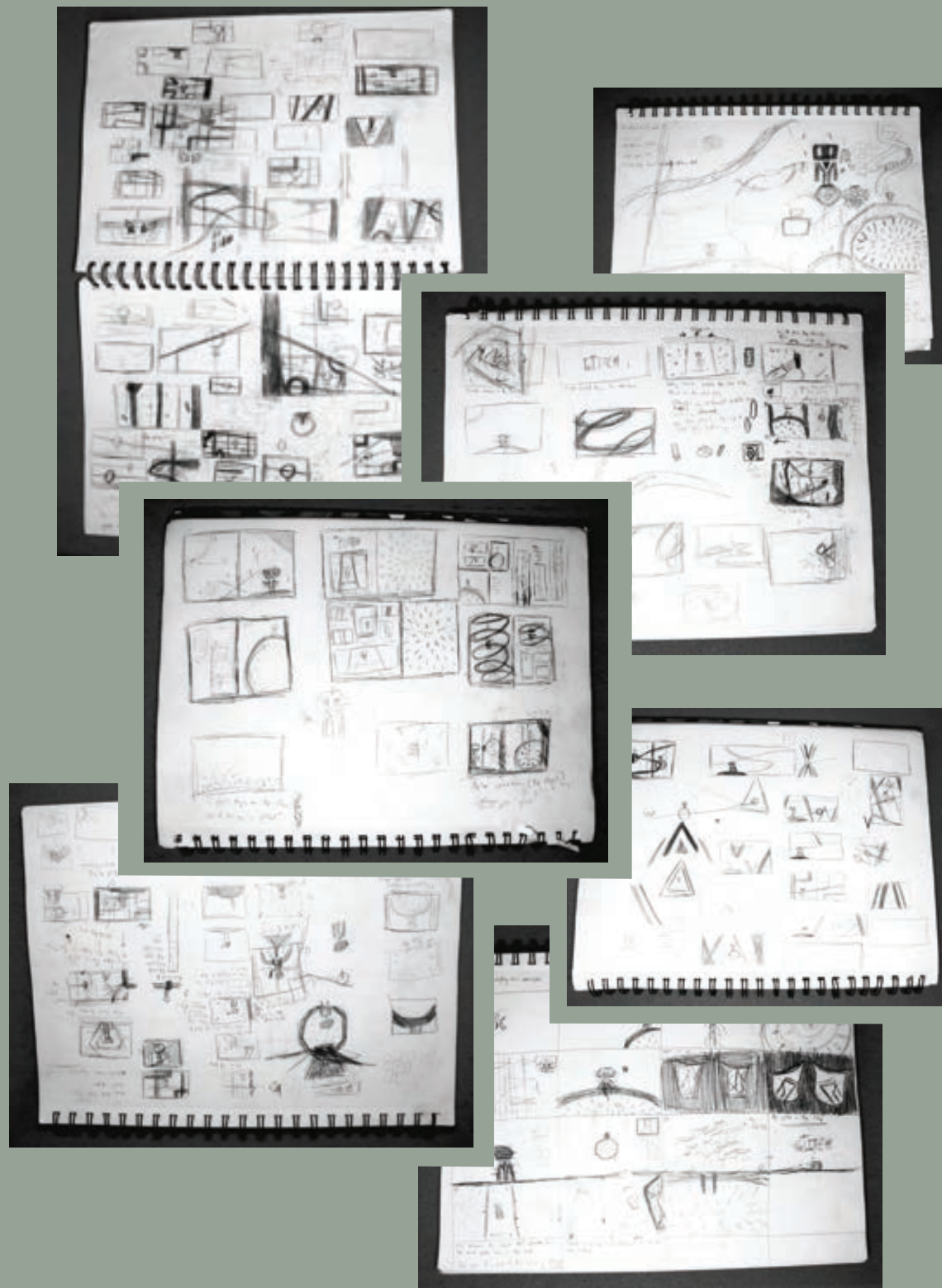

FIGURE 2

FIGURE 3

Character Design and World-Building

During this stage of pre-production, I began the character design process, which is the "full creation of a character's aesthetic, personality, behaviors and overall visual appearance" (DeGuzman et al.). It is vital to first generate a character analysis to have a solid foundation of the character's background before one should begin the designing process. The character analysis sheet includes information such as internal and external characterizations, objectives and expectations of the character, and obstacles the character encounters. For example, questions such as "What discoveries does this character make?," "What is the character's mood intensity upon entering the scene?," "What is the character's mission?," and "What does the character look like?" guided the design decisions for the character.

At the same time, I started attempting to visualize the environment and function of the video game world (Figure 3). Moriah Richard, editor of fiction, nonfiction, and plays, states in What is World-Building that world-building is "the

creation of a world that is different from our own" (Richard). Richard emphasizes that one has the freedom to make the new imaginative world "as complicated or as simple as your story needs it to be." This process flushes out details of the unknown world and showcases how characters function within the rules of the world.

It is crucial that one should not treat the character design and world-building process as two isolated components of the story, as together they drive the overall narrative story. A series of questions were asked during this process to ensure the immersive connection between the character and its surrounding world. For example, in the case of the video game world, questions such as "How does the game start and end?," "What is game setting? A card game, broad game, adventurous game?," and "What is the purpose of the game?" guided the design decisions for the world-building.

After having a thorough understanding of the character's background and a basic idea of how the video game world functioned, I decided to further develop the character in Photoshop. According to Deguzman, there are three key components of a good character design, silhouette, color palette, and exaggeration (Deguzman). Therefore, I started the character design process by simply sketching out many different versions and possible ideas for the character (Figure 4).

Then one specific character from the sketches was chosen to be further developed into a series of twenty-two different silhouette designs (Figure 5). Silhouettes focuses on how the shape language best represents a clear character design. From there one silhouette was chosen to be further developed into four distinct versions of the character (Figure 6). In the end, one of the four designs was chosen as the finial character design for the imaginative story.
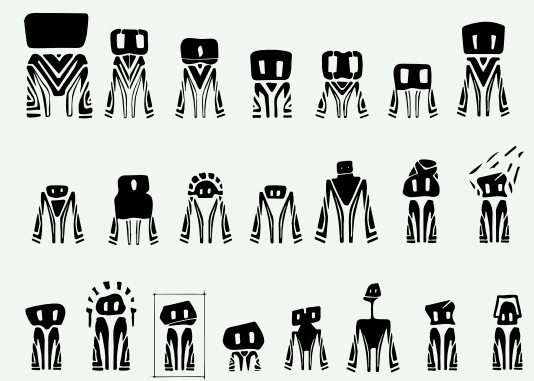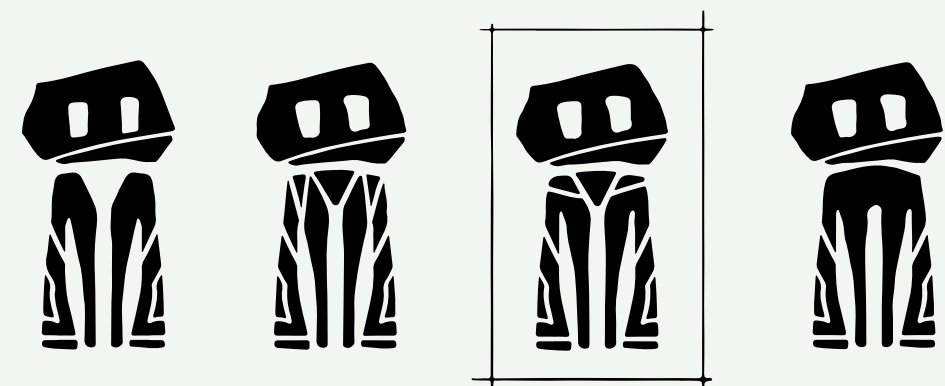

FIGURE 4

FIGURE 5

FIGURE 6

77

Character Model Sheets

It is important to note that the character acts as the protagonist of the story, or the main character that the audience relates to and emotionally identifies with. Therefore, once the basic character design was settled, my next step was to consciously give the still character personality and life by creating character model sheets, which presents "an overview of a character, including multiple poses, facial expressions and details on how that character behaves and acts" (Flynn).

Character model sheets include the expression sheet, the pose sheet, the turnaround sheet, and the color sheet. The expression sheet (figure 7) demonstrates a range of emotional states the character conveys throughout the story, such as joy, surprise, doubt, sadness, and determination. The pose sheet (figure 8) demonstrates different poses and positions that capture the character's body language throughout different context in the story, such as glitching, jumping, grabbing points, and standing on the ring. The turnaround sheet (figure 9) provides four views of the same character, such as a front, three-quarter, side, and back view of the character. The color sheet (figure 10) explores different color palettes to best support the character in its surrounding environment.
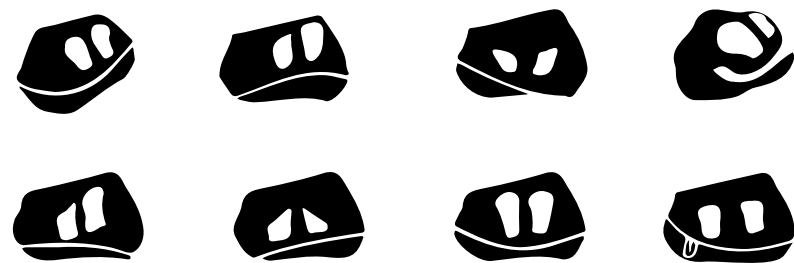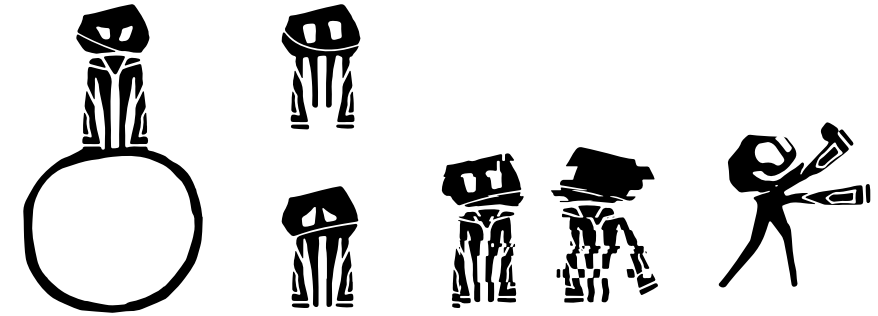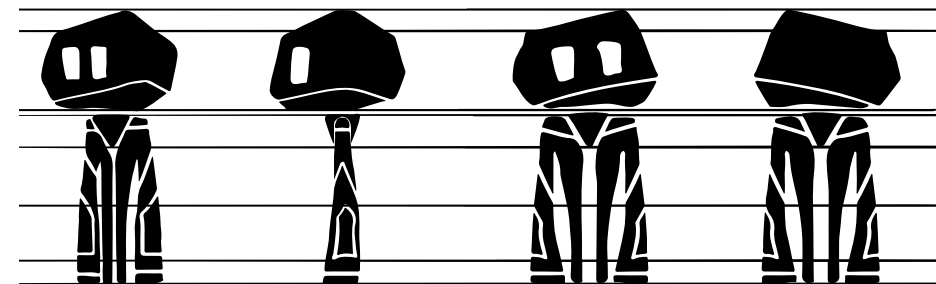

FIGURE 7

FIGURE 8

FIGURE 9

FIGURE 10

After the character model sheets were developed, I finalized this stage of the character design process with a sample style frame (figure 11) of how I envisioned the character would look and feel within the environment. Although the final character was not solidified until later in the production stage, it was vital to have these model sheets as a basic point of reference during the pre-production stage.
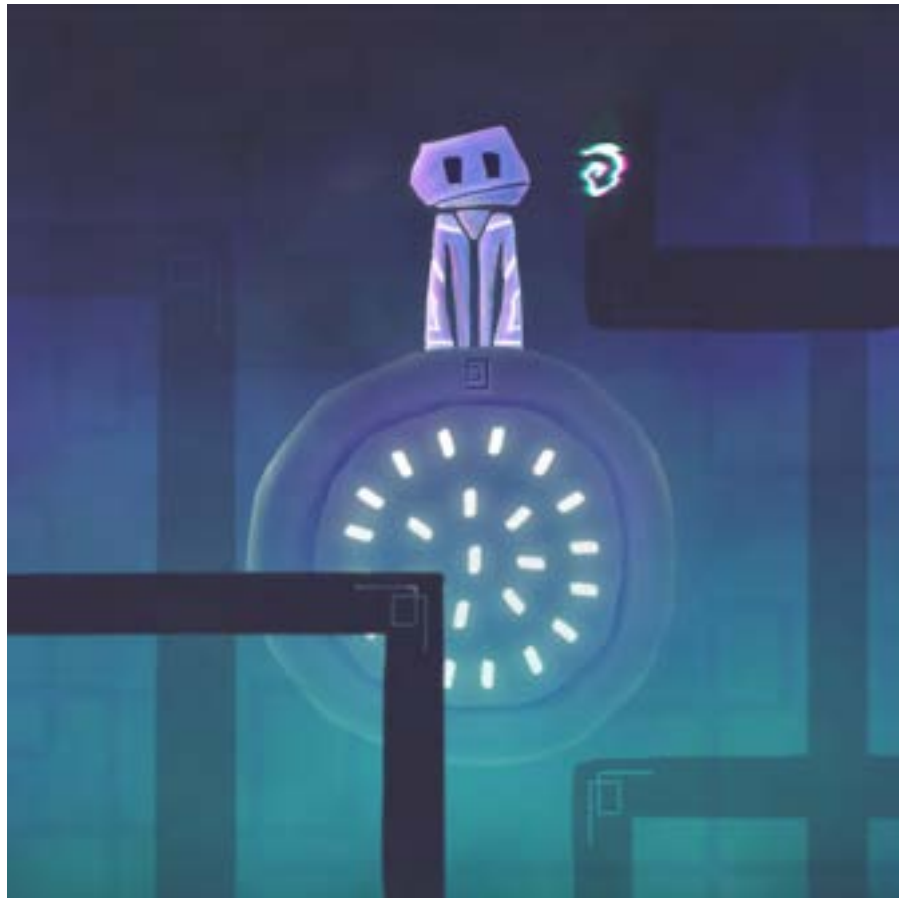

FIGURE 11

Storyboards

At this point of the pre-production process, I had developed a character design, conceptualized the function of the video game world, and drafted a working script. The next step was to begin the storyboarding process, which is defined as "a visual representation of a film sequence and breaks down the action into individual panels" (Dunham et al). In short, it can be understood as little comic panels that brings the script to life.

Storyboarding is not only a crucial element for story development, but also ultimately about effective communication between the script and the visual presentation. Andrew Adamson, producer and director of *Shrek* and *Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, stated that storyboarding is "an expensive writing tool, but an inexpensive production tool" (onstageDisney). Although storyboarding is a tedious process of trial and error, reordering scenes, and sketching new ideas, it can provide rough estimates of how the story sequence will unfold and reveals parts are not working for the story.

The challenge during this process was to not only to ensure coherency throughout the story, but also to balance the script and visuals by identifying elements needed to convey the main objective without incorporating too many unnecessary details. I had to keep in mind that not every action written in the script requires visual presentation and that every visual element presented had to hold significant meaning that serves a purpose to the story. This stage of pre-production is where one can preview the animated short before the production process by exploring different shot compositions, framing, staging, scene transitions, camera movements, scene events and timing.

I approached the storyboarding process by sketching out simple thumbnail ideas according to the script, while simultaneously developing the visual elements of the environment even further. After having an overview of the visual presentation of each frame, I moved into Photoshop and drafted three different versions of storyboards through comic panels.

The purpose of the first draft (Figure 12) is to sort out the basic events that occurred in each scene by visualizing the continuity and logicality of the script. This draft is considered a rough pass to quickly visualize the flow of the animated short.

FIGURE 12

The purpose of the second draft (Figure 13) is to flush out each scene with more details, including a more developed world building, finalizing story assets, presenting specific movements and emotions of the character, and showcasing in-between frames that sets the tone of the animated short. However, I soon realized that the worldbuilding was lacking story and required further refinement.

FIGURE 13

Therefore, I started sketching thumbnails once again while asking simple yet important questions that ultimately drove the final decision for the world-building, such as, "How does the character gain points?," "What happens to the points after the character glitches?," "Is it a bottomless world? Is there a floor?," and "How does the game start?"

After finalizing the world-building, I drafted the final storyboard. The purpose of the third draft (Figure 14) is to bring all final elements together, including detail layouts of scene compositions, camera movements and character involvement, to clearly visualize the animated short before moving forward in the pre-production process.
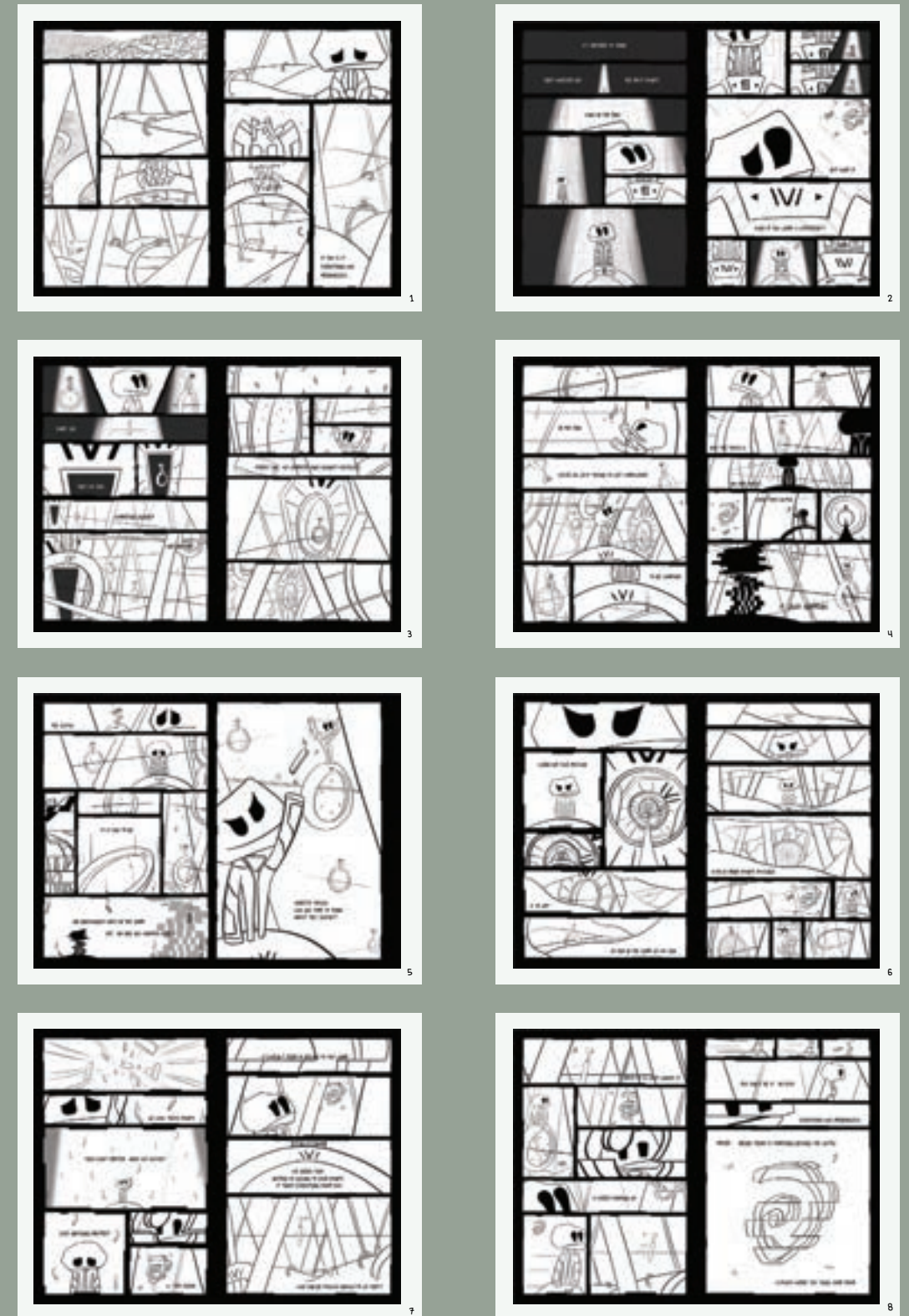

FIGURE 14

Previsualization

The last stage of the pre-production process is called previsualization, or previs for short. It "serves to both solidify design direction as well as establish animation techniques and methods" (Blazer 9). I began this process by gathering inspiration and creating mood boards, which included elements such as color and atmosphere to outline the feelings I wanted to convey through the visuals.

Then I selected six main scenes (Figure 16) from the final storyboard and created full-color style frames, which also finalized the character design. Style frames define the overall aesthetic of the animated short, which allows one to accurately visualize each main scene in the story. With the seven style frames as reference, I recorded a sample narration to have a reference of the basic timing for each scene.

During this stage of the pro-production process is when the wide cinematic 2.35 aspect ratio, which 1920x818 pixels in dimensions, was taken into consideration for both the style frames and the final animation.
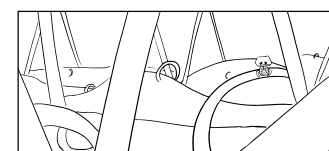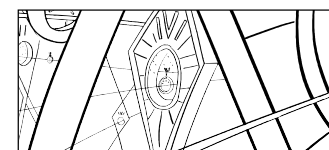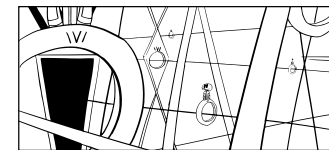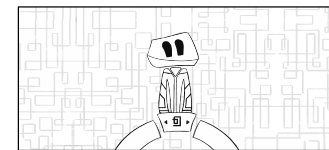

FIGURE 16

Animation Assets

The asnimation assets construction is a process that begins during the pre-production process as simple sketches and finalizes as fully rendered pieces during the production process. Assets include all the different props and elements that make up the final animation, such as the "item" (Figure 17), background patterns (Figure 18), character rings (Figure 19), point stations (Figure 20), the title font (Figure 21), level symbols (Figure 22), game points (Figure 23).

FIGURE 17

FIGURE 18

FIGURE 19

FIGURE 20

FIGURE 21

FIGURE 22

FIGURE 23
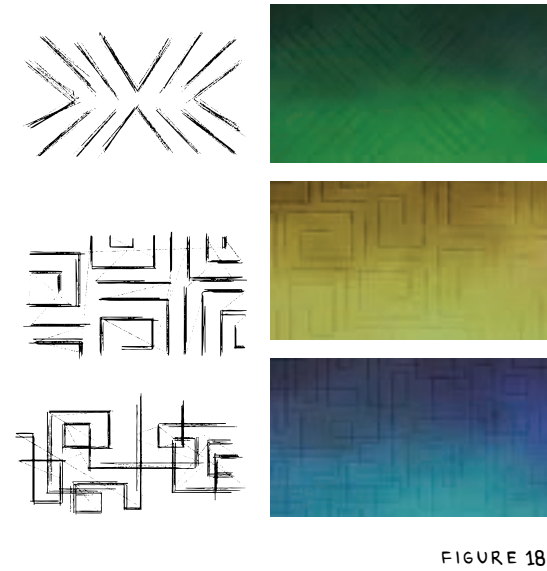
STEP TWO: PRODUCTION

After the pre-production work was completed, I started the production process in After Effects. This was where all the visual elements came together, and the animation was assembled. The technique chosen for this animated short was a 2D CGI approach, where the animation was created in a "flat or two-dimensional software environment" (Blazer 119).

The Glitch Effects

I chose to begin the production process with animating smaller-scale-elements that were less time-consuming. As the title of the animated short is "The Glitch," this inherently implies that the story revolves around elements that glitches. Therefore, the first step of the production process was to determine which elements require the glitch effect and how this effect should be presented.

While referencing the script and the storyboards, I decided that the main title (Figure 24), character (fFigure 25), and object that represents the gospel (Figure 26) should be affected by the glitch effect. I experimented with different glitch effects and developed a distinct glitch animation by combining the displacement map effect, the fractal noise effect, and expression codes from Joy Clay's "using expressions to glitch paths" (Clay).

Scene Construction

The next step was to begin working on the most tedious part of the production process - the construction of the seven scenes, each of which took an estimated of three weeks to complete. At this stage the focus was not the individual animated elements, but rather on the overall camera movements and a rough timing for each scene with the sample narration.

With the style frames as a reference, I constructed each scene with After Effect's 3D workflow. This broke the limitations of a traditional two-dimension animation and allows 2D layers to be manipulated in 3D space
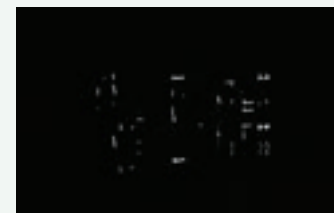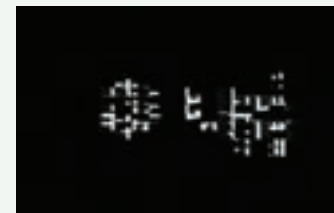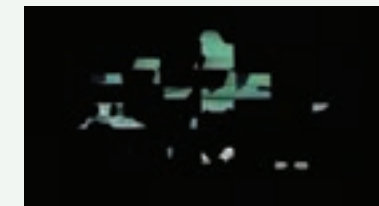

FIGURE 24
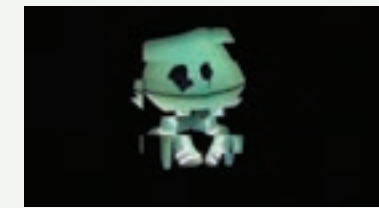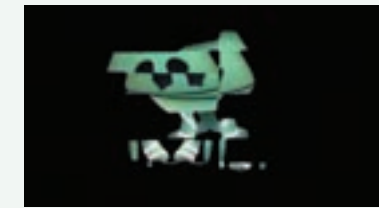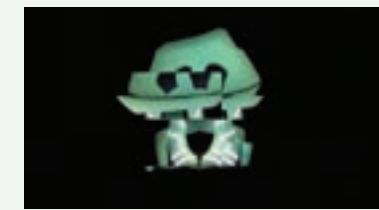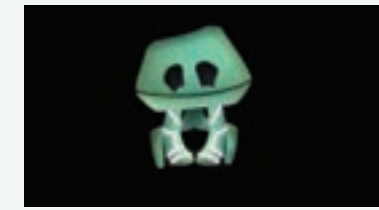
FIGURE 25
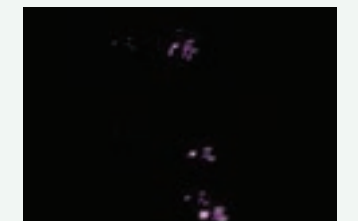
FIGURE 26

with After Effect's 3D cameras, which is also known as the 2.5D visual perception. This workflow adds an extra layer of dynamic movement, lighting, and depth to the once flat 2D layer. This technique simulates a 3D look and serves to present a more believable world to the audiences.

I began this process by clicking the "Cube" icon that enables 3D for the layers (Figure 27), which allows one to move objects along the Z-axis, in addition to the X and Y-axis. I then set up the two-node camera layers, which was a camera that followed a single point of interest while zooming and panning. After Effects created cameras that mirrored real-world camera settings such as Zoom, Depth of Field, Aperture, and Focal Distance.

With the camera set up, I started layering out each individual element in 3D space (Figure 28). This is yet another trial-and-error process, testing to see how each scene is best presented cinematically as the camera negatives through the 3D space. Much of this process was viewed in a 2-view layout (Figure 29), which provided the top view and the active camera view of the composition.
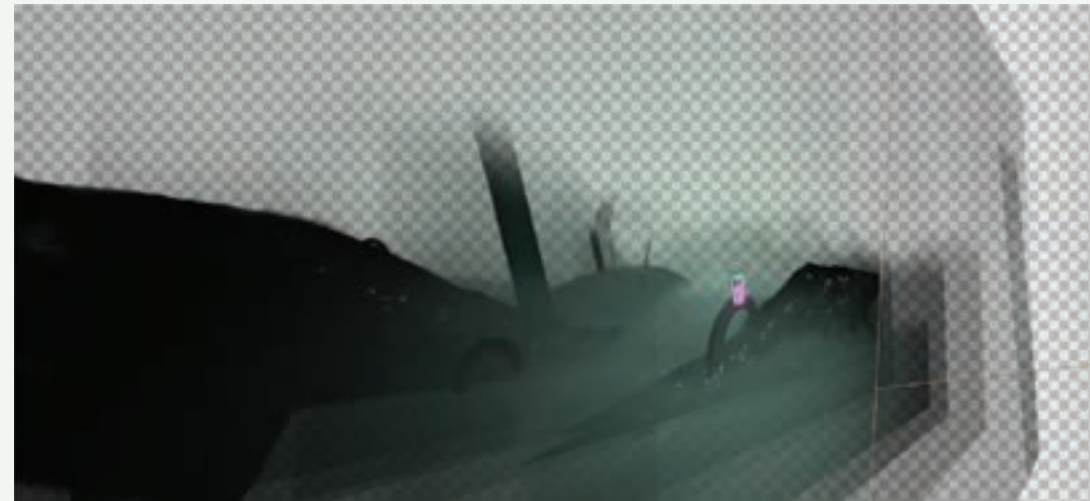
FIGURE 28
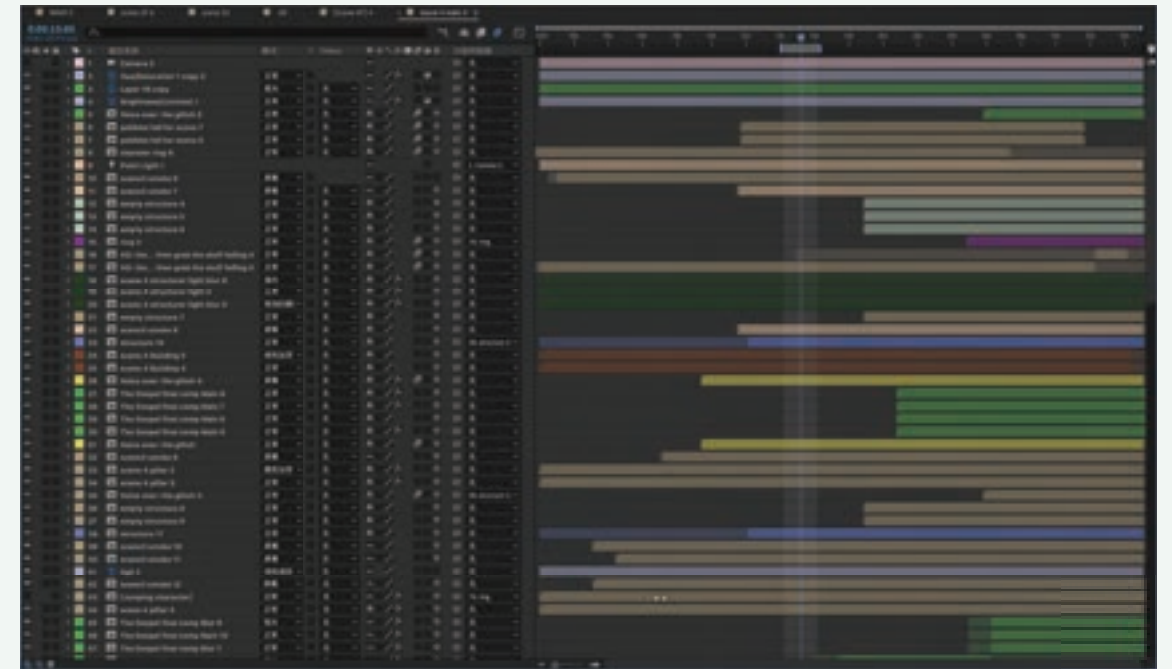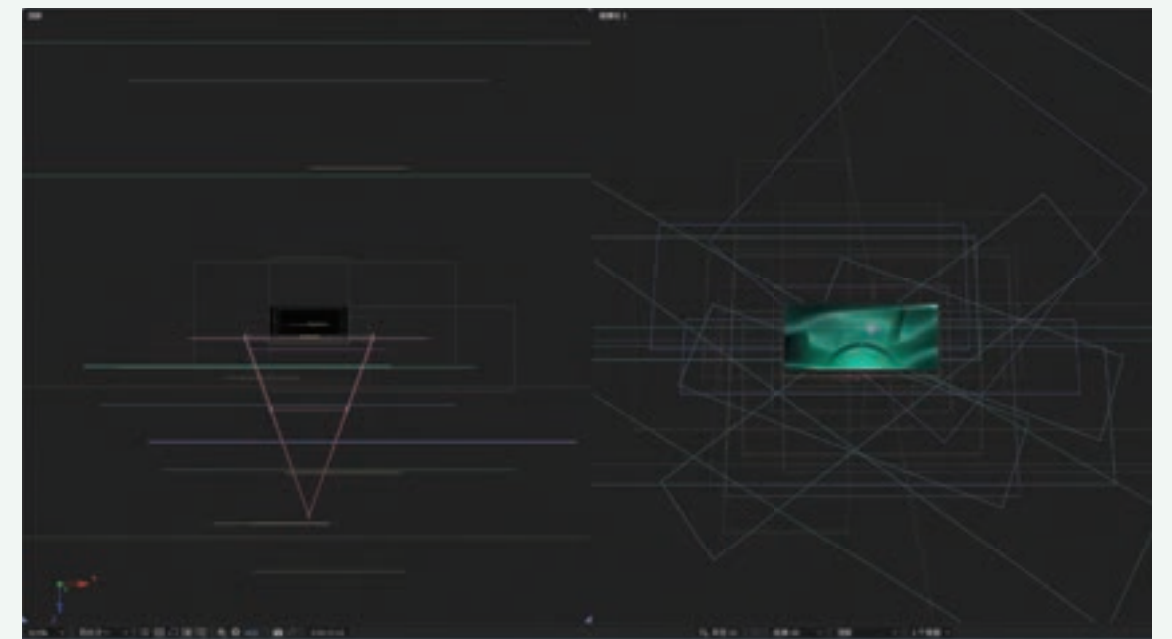
FIGURE 27

FIGURE 29

TRANSITIONS
ARE A CHANCE TO
BUILD IMPORTANT
CONNECTIVE TISSUE
THAT BRINGS THE VIWER
THROUGH THE STORY.

- EVAN PUSCHAK

Scene Transition

Although many may argue that scene transition is a technique that occurs during the post-production process, I disagree. It is my conclusion that scene transitions are more than just a technique that connects one scene to another, they are an essential element of creating an immersive experience within a story. Evan Puschak, a film critic known as Nerdwriter1 on YouTube, stated that transitions are "a chance to build important connective tissue that brings the viewer through the story" (Nerdwriter1).

Seamless storytelling is created when scene transitions are purposely and carefully placed to create dynamic storytelling. Therefore, to present a fluid and natural story, scene transitions were created simultaneously as each scene was being constructed. Different transition styles, such as fade in, fade out, parallel panning, scene glitching, and dynamic zoom were tailored to intensify the narrative of the animated short and invite the viewer to enter the story world.

Final Script

The previous process laid a foundation for the animated short. Along with the sample narration I was able to preview a rough draft of the animation for the first time. However, during this stage, I realized that the original script was lacking context and needed refinement. Therefore, after four revisions, I eventually settled on the final script, which was then sent to be professionally recorded by Brandon Jackson. After his recording, I was able to fine tune the timing for each scene according to the final narration.

Character Animation

Up until this point, the characters had been still image placeholders in the animation. The final step in the production process is character animation, which includes rigging, animating, and stylizing the character.

Before we began the rigging process, I identified major character poses (Figure 28) that occurred in the animated short, such as sitting, choosing levels, side stance and jumping. I then fine-tuned the character turn arounds and facial features accordingly, such as different eye and mouth shapes, in preparation for the rigging process (Figure 29). The decision was made to use vector-base instead of raster-base illustrations to maximize flexibility and control during the rigging and animation process.
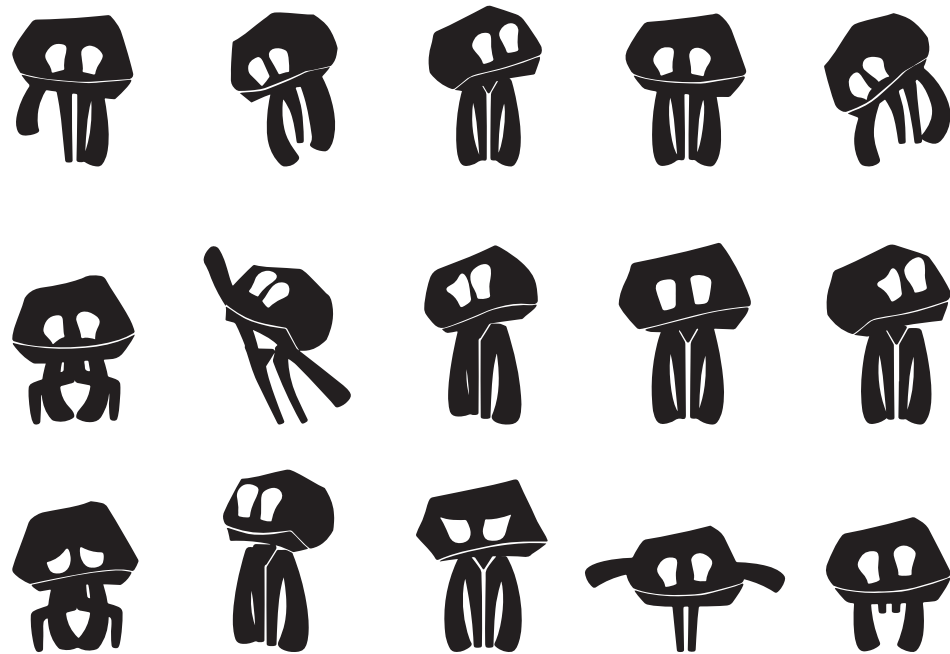
FIGURE 28

FIGURE 29

FIGURE 30

Head P   UD

LR

HS   Blink

Head R

Eye R

Eye P

Eye S
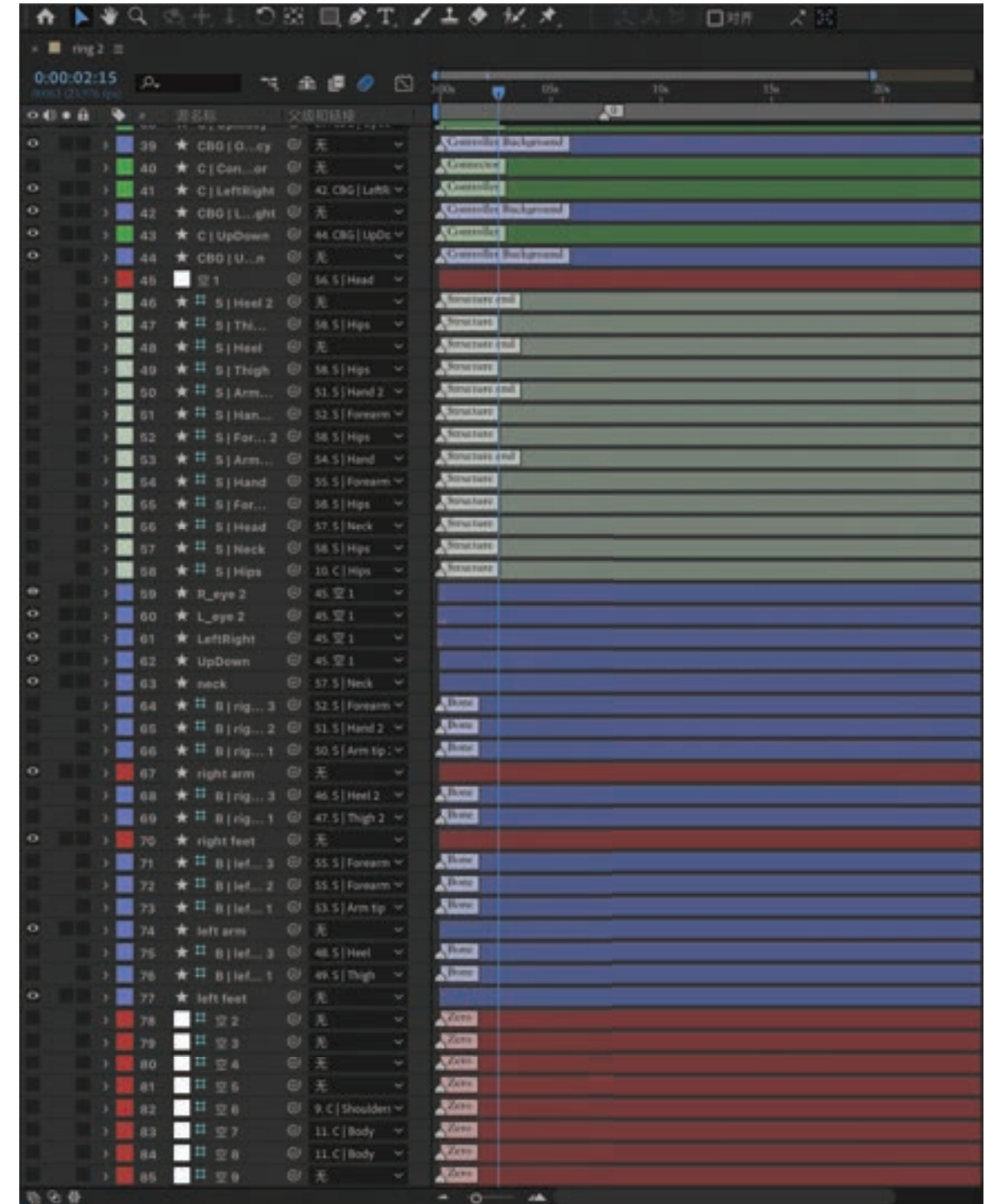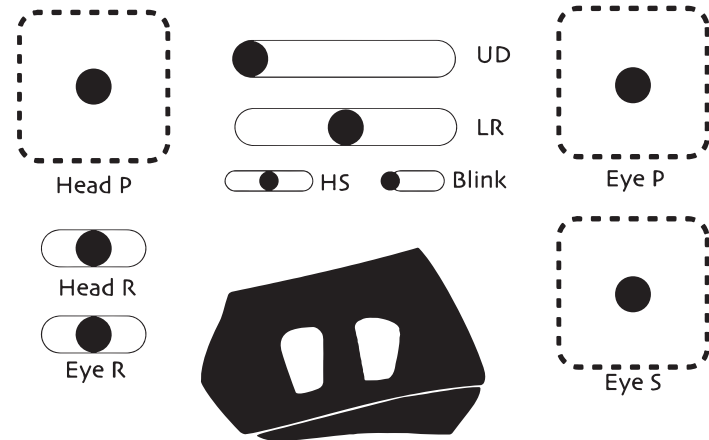
FIGURE 31

FIGURE 32

FIGURE 33

Rigging

Duik Bassel.2, a 2D character rigging and animation tool for After Effects, was utilized in this process. It is not only a free After Effects plugin, but also an extremely powerful and comprehensive tool for achieving complex character riggings. For this secession, I will only mention specific tools in Duik Bassel.2 that I have used during the rigging process (Figure 30).

The character head was rigged by creating keyframes for each position and connecting those keyframes to two different "Connectors" under Links and Constrains, I used the "Slider Controllers" and the "2D Slider Controllers" (Figure 31). These controllers provided an intuitive and easy way to manipulate the character animation by creating a slider or joystick that ultimately drives the animation. Duik Bassel.2 also allows one to place "additional keyframes in between key poses" (Williams and Plummer), which increased the continuity of the head turns.

Individual hominoid structures were placed over the character design accordingly (Figure 32). The limbs of the character were first pined with the puppet pin tool, by selecting the "Add Bone" function under Link and Constrains, I was able to parent those bones to the limb structures. Then with all the structure layers selected, I was able to create a finished character rig by clicking the "Auto-rig & IK" button (Figure 33).
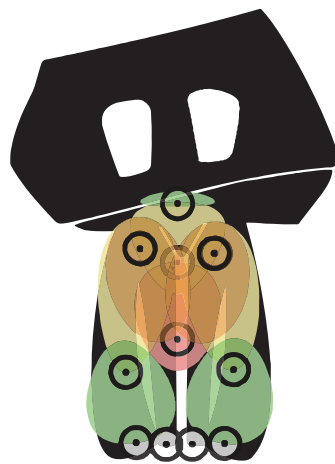
Animation

After setting up a fully functioning character rig, I started animating the character rig by adding keyframes to my controllers. First, I blocked out the timing for different key poses, which included the beginning, middle, and ending points of the character's movements. Then I made further refinements by adding secondary movements to not only enhance the motion between the character and its surrounding objects, but also emotions and personality of the character.

Stylization

Once I was satisfied with the character animation, I stylized the character (Figure 34) by experimenting with different layer style options within After Effects, such as "inner shadow," "outer shadow," "outer shadow," and "bevel and emboss." The character's color, highlight and shadow were also greatly affected by the environmental lighting of each scene and had to be considered during this final stage as the animation process came to an end.

STEP THREE: POST-PRODUCTION

With the main animation complete, along with the narration by Brandon Jackson, the only final step is the adding the background music composed by David Walthall into the animation.

This was the final stage of compositing all the different elements together before rendering out the final deliverable.

FIGURE 34

≫ CHAPTER FOUR

visual solution

VISUAL SOLUTION

To present imaginative storytelling as one of many pre-evangelistic tools, the visual solution to the proposed research problem was to create an imaginative story based on a biblical eternal value system to exemplify how storytelling can create an enticing environment that facilitates meaningful dialogue on spiritual truths.

The finial deliverable is a three-minute animated short entitled "The Glitch." This animation employs narrative storytelling, imaginative worldbuilding, and characters that the post-Christian ontological materialist identifies with. Inviting them to "slow down and reflect" (E360M, Tool #3: Create Atmospheres of Reflection) on the meaninglessness of living life without the hope of eternality.

Why Animation?
Animation is a medium that simplifies abstract concepts through visual storytelling. This medium requires both the visual and auditory senses for an individual to process information, which can easily create engagement and evoke emotions that resonate with viewers. Through moving objects and the framing of scenes, not only is each shot able to guide the viewers' attention on specific point of interest, but they also work to entice the individual to explore and experience the story world.

CHAPTER FOUR,

VISUAL SOLUTION...

STORY CONCEPT

After in-depth research on the worldview of a post-Christian ontological materialist and understanding Schaeffer's idea of "taking the roof off," I decided to create an animation that not only pushes the individual towards "the natural direction in which his presuppositions would take him" (Schaeffer 127), but also exposes their preconceived reality and placed it against the truth.

Additionally, Jesus' parables are a "metaphorical comparison" (Sider 455) between everyday life experiences and divine abstract truths about the Kingdom of God. Therefore, I drew examples from ordinary life experiences that a post-Christian ontological materialist could easily relate to, understand, and recall because of their surroundings.

"The Glitch" is a first-person narrative story that tackles the materialistic worldview, which says that the finite life is what gives one meaning to live. The story is presented in a video game setting, in which the main character observes and reflects on the phenomena that winning the game is not determined by how many points one obtains, but whether one has acquired the object that represents the message of the gospel.

The story calls for readers to reflect on the concepts that life is short and one is not guaranteed tomorrow. If death came today, and the biblical truth of eternity is real. Is one spending time chasing after things without an eternal value?

I came across the quote "obligation to feel can freeze feelings" (Lewis 47), therefore I decided to take a conceptual approach to the narrative story. This allows the individual to look alongside the concept of life and death through storytelling. The following paragraphs will give full defense of the visual solution to the proposed research problem.

STORY SCRIPT

1   IF LIFE WERE A GAME, IS WINNING BASED ON THE POINTS WE GET?

2   OR WILL IT BE AS SIMPLE AS A CHOICE WE MAKE?

3   YOU THINK THAT'S HOW MY STORY ENDS?

4   NO, BUT LET ME TELL YOU HOW IT ALL BEGAN.

5   CHOICES. GIVEN TO US FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.

6   EVEN THE CHOICE TO OBTAIN THIS ITEM

7   AN ITEM OF NO WORTH... OR SO WE BELIEVE

8   IT'S NATURAL TO THINK THAT WHOEVER

9   HAS THE MOST POINTS WINS IN THE END.

10   YET SOMETIMES I WONDER IF WINNING IS DIFFERENT IN THIS GAME.

11   SOME SAY WE COMPETE AGAINST ONE ANOTHER.

12   OTHERS SAY WE COMPETE ONLY AGAINST OURSELVES...

13   AT THE END OF THE DAY, WE'RE ALL JUST TRYING TO WIN.

14   BUT HERE'S THE CATCH.

15   NO ONE KNOWS WHEN THEIR GAME ENDS,

16   NO ONE KNOWS WHEN THEY'LL GLITCH. IT JUST HAPPENS...

17   "THE GLITCH."

18   IT IS SAID TO BE THE FATAL BUG IN THE GAME.

19   YET... NO ONE THINKS ABOUT IT.

20   WE ARE TOO FOCUSED ON WINNING,

21   BY GETTING AS FAR IN THE GAME WITH THE MOST POINTS POSSIBLE.

22   HA. OR SO WE THOUGHT.

23   I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED WHAT HAPPENS AFTER "THE GLITCH."

24   I'VE WONDERED WHAT THESE POINTS ARE FOR AT THE END.

25   I'VE WONDERED WHAT IT REALLY MEANS TO WIN.

26   TIME AFTER TIME, WE ARE REMINDED ABOUT THE ITEM,

27   AS IF... IT'S GOOD FOR US TO OBTAIN IT.

28   YET, THE ITEM KEEPS GLITCHING,

29   LIKE IT DOESN'T EVEN BELONG IN THE GAME.

30   MOST OF US JUST IGNORE IT.

31   BUT HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHY IT'S HERE?

32   OR EVEN... WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

33   I ASK MYSELF AS MY END DRAWS NEAR,

34   WHAT IF "THE GLITCH" IS NOT THE END,

35   WHAT IF WE WIN NOT BY POINTS, BUT INSTEAD BY A SIMPLE CHOICE?

36   UNLIKE THE POINTS,

37   ARE WE MEANT FOR SOMETHING MORE THAN JUST THIS GAME?

38   COULD "THE GLITCH" BE OUR WAY OUT

39   AND THE ITEM IS THE KEY FORWARD?

40   IF THAT'S THE CASE, WILL YOU CONTINUE TO IGNORE IT?

Life as a Game

Inspired by the famous saying that "life is just like a game" and considering the prominent place video games have with my target audience compared to other forms of games, I decided that a video game setting is the best metaphorical comparison for life, which is clearly stated in line 1 of the script,

1   If life were a game…

As I continued to develop the narrative story, I was able to connect different video game elements to pre-existing connotations of life such as, gaining points as different milestones in life; obtaining "the item" as choosing to believe and accept Christ; choosing levels as different paths one takes in life; winning as being successful in life; and glitching as death.

After conducting qualitative primary research, I was able to grasp how a post-Christian ontological materialists perceive the ultimate value of life and understood their attitude towards life beyond death. Responses from question one align with the term "to go far in life," which inspired the design decision (Figure 37) to have characters following a line that leads to different point stations throughout the game. This presents paths an individual takes in life that lead to different milestones and achievements.

FIGURE 37

FIGURE 38

Death as "The Glitch"

Questions two and four specifically asked about one's attitude towards death. Although respondents stated that there is a fear towards death, it was a fear of not being able to fully attain one's goal in life instead of death itself. This concept is reflected in lines 17 to 21 of the script,

17   "The Glitch."
18   It is said to be the fatal bug in the game.
19   Yet… no one thinks about it.
20   We are too focused on winning,
21   by getting as far in the game with the most points possible.

Responses from question three clearly reflected the worldview of a post-Christian ontological materialist, stating that "it's the finite life that gives us meaning to live." Therefore, in scenes four (Figure 38) and five (Figure 39) I presented this presupposition of life and placed it up against the reality that the "points" one spends time gaining in life have no value when death comes unannounced.

By visually presenting this concept, an individual can look alongside the reality of death and the hopelessness of the finite life if there is nothing beyond death.

FIGURE 38

This is Schaeffer's idea of "taking the roof off," instead of trying to turn an individual from his position, I led them towards "the natural direction in which his presuppositions would take him" (127). It is then than an individual starts to think about a possible reality outside of their own belief systems and comprehend the biblical truth of eternity in a new light.

Lines 14 to 18 of the script introduces the concept of a physical death because of sin with the connotation of "the Glitch",

14   But here's the catch.
15   No one knows
     when their game ends,
16   No one knows
     when they'll glitch.
     It just happens...
17   "The Glitch."
18   It is said to be the fatal
     bug in the game.

Alex Pieschel, writer for Arcade Review stated in the article Glitches: A Kind of History that the differences between a "bug" and a "glitch" is that a "bug" can be blamed on human error, while "glitch" is mysteriously caused by interference "outside the realm of code."

In line 15, I used the word "bug" to indicate the human error of sin, which led to "the Glitch:" death for all. Two main ideas are presented through "the Glitch." First, the characters, unlike the "points," ultimately do not belong in the video game. This concept represents the biblical truth that the physical world is not our home and that there is eternity after death. Second, I presented that "the Glitch" is a certain yet unpredictable event. This concept represents the biblical truth that death is unavoidable and unpredictable.

Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. (Jm. 4. 14)

The Gospel as "The Item"

Everyone has the opportunity to accept the Gospel, which is represented by "the item" that is glitching in and out around the characters. This concept is represented in line 26 to 27 of the script,

26   Time after time, we are
     reminded about the item,
27   as if... it's good for us to
     obtain it.

However, a post-Christian ontological materialist, whose ultimate value in life is anchored in the finite and physical materials, does not see the value of obtaining non-material possessions. This concept is represented through lines 5 to 7 of the script,

5   Choices. Given to us from
    the very beginning.
6   Even the choice to obtain
    this item
7   An item of no worth...
    or so we believe

Aside from the characters, "the item" is the other element that glitches in the animated short, indicating that "the item" is not designed to be apart of the game and is programmed with a different set of code compared to the video game world.

This implies that there is a place outside of the video game world where "the item" came from. This reflects the truth of the gospel that points one to Christ, who is not of this world. This concept is represented through lines 28 to 32, and 38 to 39 of the script,

28   Yet, the item
     keeps glitching,
29   like it doesn't even
     belong in the game.
30   Most of us just ignore it.
31   But have you ever
     wondered why it's here?
32   Or even... where did it
     come from?
38   Could "The Glitch"
     be our way out
39   and the item the
     key forward?

Questions

Previous research showed how Jesus used a somatic method of teaching, through parables that ask questions but do not supply the answers (Socratesinthecity 31:48-32:01). This method of teaching challenged His listeners to continue to ponder, to think about the meaning behind the parables, and "presented them with the need for a decision on their parts..." (Kistemaker 71).

In the same way, the narrative story is filled with questions that challenge the viewer to give a response, examples are found in lines 1, 2, 31, 32, 35 to 40 of the script,

1   If life were a game,
      is winning based on the points we get?
2   Or will it be as simple as a choice we make?
31   But have you ever wondered why it's here?
32   Or even... where did it come from?
35   What if we win not by points,
      but instead by a simple choice?
36   Unlike the points,
37   are we meant for something
      more than just this game?
38   Could "the Glitch" be our way out
39   and the item the key forward?
40   If that's the case, will you continue to ignore it?

Transportation and Indentification

Research revealed that the most effective way to simulate transportation and identification through narratives is when an individual becomes an "active processor" (Green 101) of the story, as if he or she is "an unobserved observer in scenes of the lives of characters" (Oatley 445).

This finding guided the decision to utilize the I-SELF model throughout the narrative story, which presents the inner consciousness of the character and invites the individual to step into the minds of people they are not.

This internalization of the narrative promotes understanding of the experience of the protagonist as important to the individual's own lives and experiences (Shen 169). Examples can be seen in lines 3, 4, 10, 23 to 25 and 28 in the script,

3   You think that's how my story ends?
4   No, but let me tell you how it all began.
10   Yet sometimes I wonder if winning is
      different in this game.
23   I've always wondered what happens after
      "the Glitch."
24   I've wondered what these points are for at
      the end.
25   I've wondered what it really means to win.
33   I ask myself as my end draws near,

WORLD-BUILDING

During my research on the materialistic worldview, I came across what Lewis believed to be the reality of a "materialistic universe:" an "empty space, completely dark and unimaginably cold" (Lewis 13-14). This description guided design decisions for the video-game world, such as the color scheme and environment design.

Game Environments

As mentioned in chapter three, world-building is closely connected with the character design process, it is difficult to situate characters in scenes without first establishing the landscape of the world they are in. Additionally, environments play a significant role in storytelling by providing visual context, that is, information that creates an immersive experience for viewers.

Based on Lewis' description of an "empty space," I developed five fairly simple yet empty environments, which include the Level Room, the Game Entrance, the Point Station, the Deep End, and the Wasteland.

The Level Room (Figure 40) in scene two depicts an environment where the room pattern and color changes according to the character's choice of game level, this reflects the concept that an individual has the freewill to chooses one's direction in life.

The Game Entrance (Figure 41) in scene three establishes an overall tone of the video game world, revealing parts of the buildings to slowly entice the individual's curiosity to explore the story world.

The Point Station (Figure 42) in scene four reveals the function of the buildings in the game world, which are stations where character gather points. This clearly depicts the worldview of an ontological materialist, who believes that the ultimate value in life is anchored in the finite and physical materials.

The Deep End (Figure 43) in scene five describes a higher level within the game, which represents individuals that have traveled far in the game of life. It is in both scene four and five where the aftermath of "the Glitch" is clearly depicted. As the character glitches, the character ring and the points within the ring stay in the game and fall to the Wasteland. This reflects the concept that physical materials have no value to an individual when one faces death.

The Wasteland (Figure 44) in scene one and seven depicts the grounds of the video game world, revealing a devastated environment made up with fallen points and rings. This environment provides context to the viewer and emphasizes the worthlessness of the collected points when one faces death.
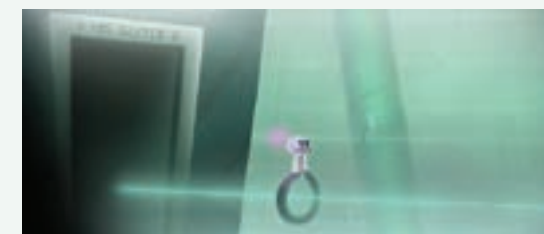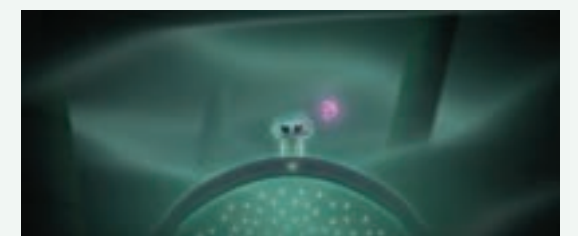

FIGURE 40

FIGURE 41

FIGURE 42

FIGURE 43

FIGURE 44

COLOR SCHEME

Color is an important element in visual storytelling. It can either make or break a design as colors define the overall tone to the story and evoke specific emotions within the viewer.

As I referenced Lewis' description of the materialistic world: "completely dark and unimaginably cold," I decided that the color green (Figure 45) was a perfect fit for this description. Although green is commonly associated with nature and provides a sense of calmness, it can easily be associated with money and materialism (Wharton). Research also found that individuals with a "high need of achievement" associate words related to success with green (Mammarella 915), which corresponds to the ultimate value an ontological materialist has placed on life.

CYMK 0, 0, 0, 95
HEX #0D0D0D
RGB 13, 13, 13

CYMK 41, 0, 19, 75
HEX #264034
RGB 38, 64, 52

CYMK 53, 0, 16, 75
HEX #1E4036
RGB 30, 64, 54

CYMK 47, 0, 27, 65
HEX #2F5941
RGB 47, 89, 65

CYMK 53, 0, 34, 45
HEX #428C5C
RGB 66, 140, 92

CYMK 51, 0, 29, 45
HEX #458C64
RGB 69, 140, 100

CYMK 62, 0, 23, 25
HEX #49BF94
RGB 73, 191, 148

CYMK 26, 0, 12, 25
HEX #8EBFA8
RGB 142, 191, 168

CYMK 27, 0, 18, 15
HEX #89D9B3
RGB 137, 217, 179

CYMK 28, 0, 13, 15
HEX #9CD9BC
RGB 156, 217, 188

CYMK 29, 0, 8, 15
HEX #9AD9C7
RGB 154, 217, 199

CYMK 14, 0, 6, 15
HEX #BAD9CB
RGB 186, 217, 203

FIGURE 45

116

"THE ITEM"

An important element in the story is "the item" that represents the gospel. "The item" has the shape of a spiral (Figure 46), which is often associated with life and eternity. "The item" shaped as a spiral supports the truth that the Gospel leads one towards eternity life with Christ.

Pink (Figure 47), as the complementary color of green, was chosen to represent "the item." This created a vibrant high contrast comparison between elements in the video game and "the item" which does not belong in the game world. Additionally, this color choice was also inspired by the biblical truth that God is love. Pink is often associated with romance and love.

FIGURE 46

CYMK 6, 55, 0, 65
HEX #542B59
RGB 84, 40, 89

CYMK 1, 51, 0, 25
HEX #BE5EBF
RGB 190, 94, 191

CYMK 0, 37, 0, 5
HEX #F199F2
RGB 241, 153, 242

CYMK 6, 15, 0, 5
HEX #E4CEF2
RGB 228, 206, 242

FIGURE 47

CHARACTER

Based on previous visual analysis, I found that humanoid characters enhance feelings of otherworldliness, while still generating a strong sense of identification with the viewers. This ignites a desire within the viewer to willingly "inhabit the alternative world" (Davison xiii) with "less perceived control or manipulation" (Shen et al. 170). Therefore, the story character (Figure 48) has basic human facial features and structure, such as a head, eyes, mouth, neck and limbs.

Research also showed that an important element of identification is based on an individual's "heightened emotional and cognitive connections" (Cohen 251) with an on-screen protagonist. This indicates that a successful character design creates strong emotional connections with the viewer. Although the overall character design was intentionally kept simple to aid the character animation process, I emphasized on the facial expressions of the character by depicting a larger head and facial features in comparison to the body.

Responses from the qualitative primary research reflected the sense of confidence an ontological materialist holds on their perception of life. Therefore, I decided to translate this attitude through a stern and stable character with bold geometric shapes, such as rectangles and triangles. Furthermore, I decided to use harmonious colors that align with the environmental color to draw a contrast the vibrant color of "the item."

FIGURE 48
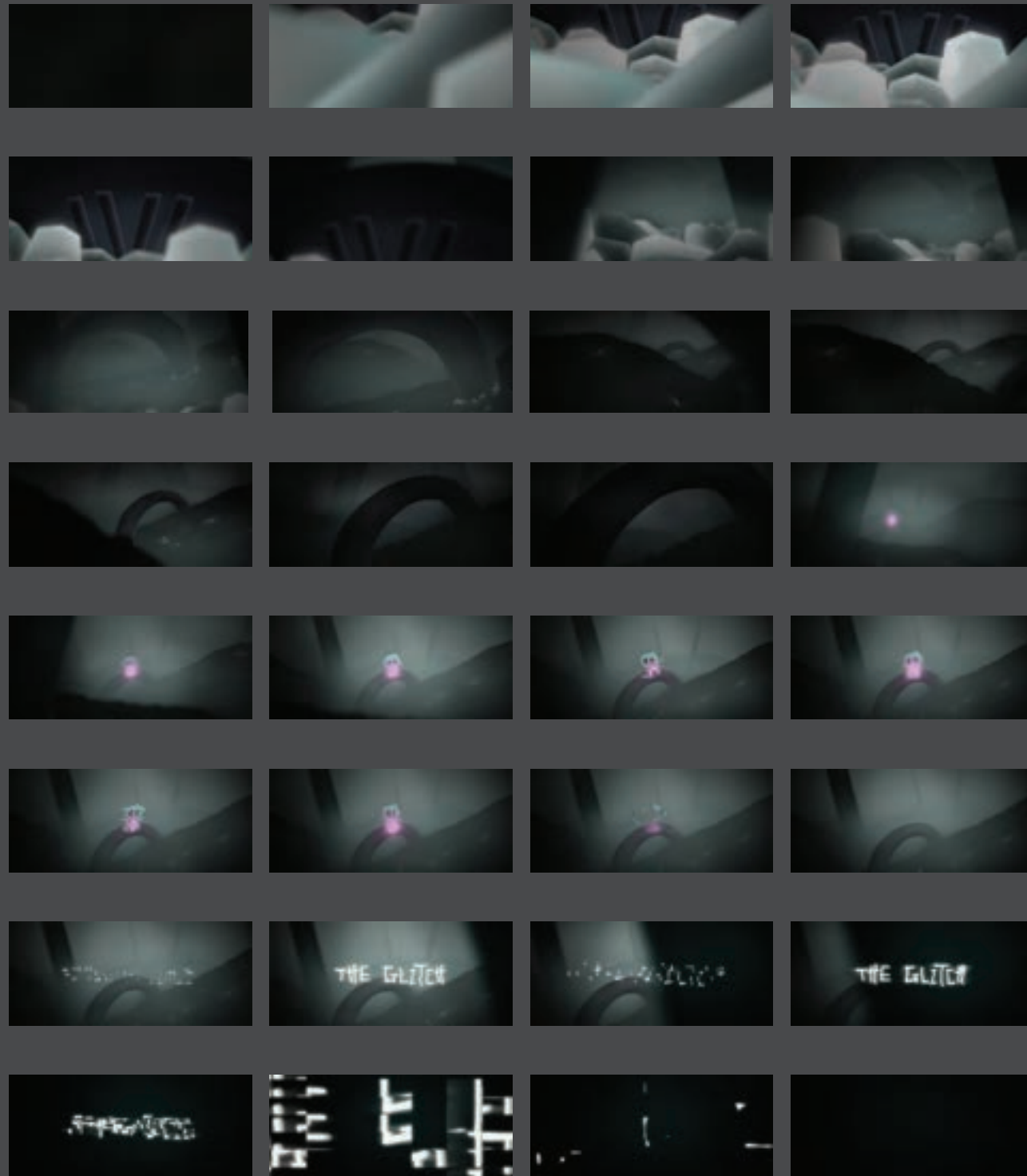
FINAL DELIVERABLE

Scene One

The story begins by revealing a deserted Wasteland as the camera traveles through fallen points and rings that have been left behind. The camera eventually zooms into the protagonist of the story who glitches away with "the item" in hand. The end of this scene reveals the title of the animated short, "the Glitch." The narration of this scene proposes the main idea of the animated short and sends an invitation for viewers to look deeper into the story.

1   If life were a game, is winning based on the points we get?
2   Or will it be as simple as a choice we make?
3   You think that's how my story ends?
4   No, but let me tell you how it all began.

Scene Two

The camera zooms out and reveals a character scrolling through different level choices, while "the item" glitches into frame. As the character is curious but pays no attention to "the item," the character eventually chooses the green level by jumping on the platform. This action causes the platform to merge into a ring, triggering a line to appeared in the center of the ring, which leads the character into the game. The narration of this scene emphasizes on one's freewill to choose, which circles back in scene seven when viewers are challenged to make a decision.

5 Choices. Given to us from the very beginning.
6 Even the choice to obtain this item
7 An item of no worth… or so we believe
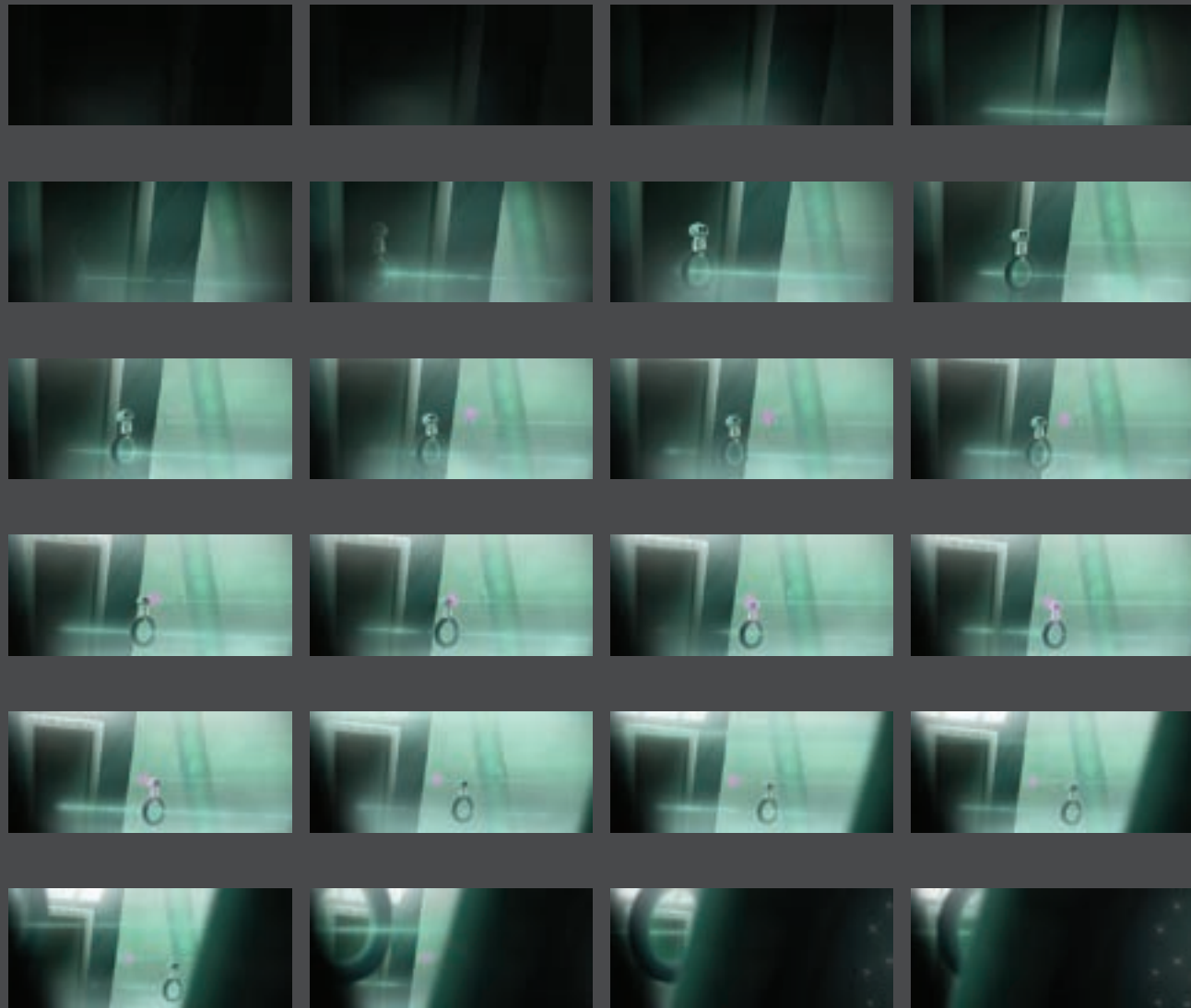
Scene Three

The character enters the video game world as the camera pans right and zooms out of the Game Entrance. This scene slowly reveals the overall environment of the world, as well as establishes the presences of the characters. The narration of this scene presents the assumption that this game might require a different method of wining compared to other games.

8   It's natural to think that whoever
9   has the most points wins in the end.
10 Yet sometimes I wonder if winning is different in this game.
11 Some say we compete against one another.

Scene Four

The camera slowly zooms out, revealing different characters striving to collect points in a large point station only to glitch away moments later. This scene begins with a happy tone that quicky shift to a serious tone as "the Glitch" is addressed for this first time in the animated short. After "the Glitch," the character's ring and the collected points eventually fall to the Wasteland. Scene four transitions to scene five through a super zoom effect as the narration draws the viewer to travel further into the game world.

12   Others say we compete only against ourselves...

13   At the end of the day, we're all just trying to win.

14   But here's the catch.

15   No one knows when their game ends,

16   No one knows when they'll glitch. It just happens...

17   "The Glitch."

18   It is said to be the fatal bug in the game.

19   Yet… no one thinks about it.

20   We are too focused on winning,

Scene Five

Scene five magnetifies and exaggerates the aftermath of "the Glitch" as the camera zooms out of the Deep End, bringing the character and its points into the frame. Moments after "the item" glitches in, the character glitches away, leaving the character's ring and the collected points behind and as they fall to the Wasteland. The narrative reveals the protagonist's thoughts as he beings to process all that he has witnessed in the game.

21   by getting as far in the game with the most points possible.
22   Ha. Or so we thought.
23   I've always wondered what happens after "the Glitch."
24   I've wondered what these points are for at the end.
25   I've wondered what it really means to win.

Scene Six

The camera focuses on a close shot of "the item," followed by focusing on the character's emotions. The visuals and narration of this scene force the viewer to shift their focus from "the Glitch" and the points to discovering "the item's" origin.

26 Time after time, we are reminded about the item,
27 as if… it's good for us to obtain it.
28 Yet, the item keeps glitching,
29 like it doesn't even belong in the game.
30 Most of us just ignore it.
31 But have you ever wondered why it's here?
32 Or even... where did it come from?
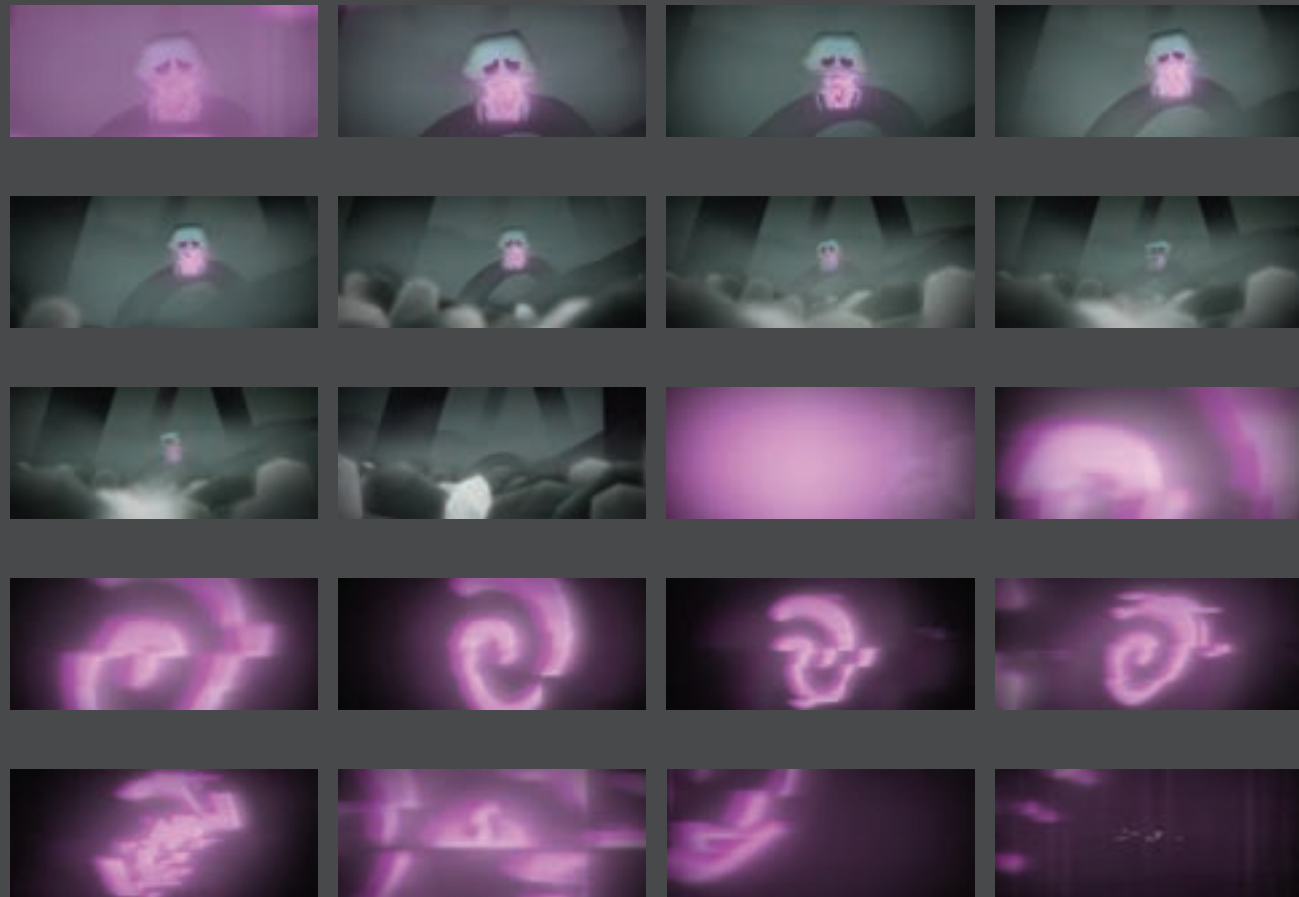
Scene Seven

Scene seven connects the viewer back to scene one, where the character is sitting on the ring with "the item" in hand. The Camera slowly zooms out while the character glitches away with "the item," as the Wasteland comes into frame. This scene draws visual impact on the viewers once again by revealing the worthlessness of the points when the "the Glitch" happens. The narrative concludes the animated short by suggesting that "the item" many see as worthless might in fact be the answer to winning the game. In the end, challenging the viewer to make a decision and choose "the item."

33   I ask myself as my end draws near,
34   What if "The Glitch" is not the end,
35   What if we win not by points, but instead by a simple choice?
36   Unlike the points,
37   are we meant for something more than just this game?
38   Could "The Glitch" be our way out
39   and the item the key forward?
40   If that's the case, will you continue to ignore it?

≫ CHAPTER FIVE
conclusion

CHAPTER FIVE,

CONCLUSION...
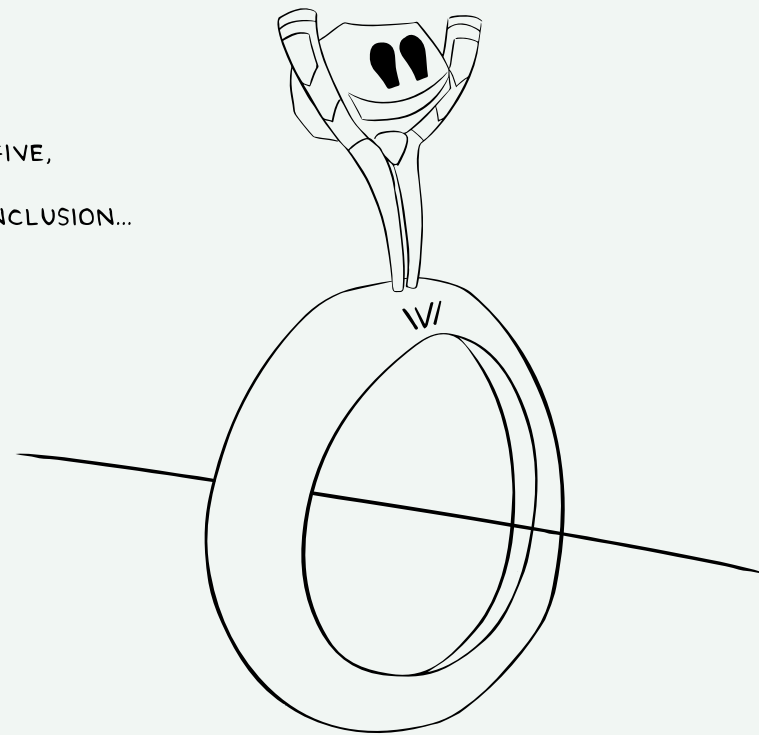
In summary, ontological materialism is a preconceived reality that the ultimate value of existence is purely physical. Therefore, the definition of success can only be measured by one's accumulated material possessions in life.

Consequently, this belief causes one to neglect the reality of death and the importance of cultivating an eternal value system. Furthermore, in a post-Christian era where individuals routinely reject overtly Christian materials, imaginative

storytelling can act as a pre-evangelistic tool that helps one slow down and reflect on biblical spiritual truths.

It is important to understand that Imaginative storytelling in itself has no power to change an individual's heart. However, it can be one of many pre-evangelistic tools that God uses to draw individuals to Himself. Therefore, this research proposes that imaginative storytelling is one of many pre-evangelistic tools that invites one to "slow down and

reflect" on biblical spiritual truths.

My final visual solution, entitled "The Glitch", challenges individuals to make a decision as one reflects on the concept that life is short, and one is not guaranteed tomorrow. If death comes today, and the biblical truth of eternity is real, is one spending time chasing after things without an eternal value?

"The Glitch" has been designed to be posted on different social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube, where individuals can watch and share the video with friends and family. In this way, anyone that comes across the animation may begin to reflect on the reality of death, the hope for eternity, and challenged to respond to the message of Christ. My goal is to make the animation as accessible as possible to anyone online and pointing them to the website which explains the concepts and research behind the proposed problem.

Research revealed that the Jesus Film Project attached follow-up questions to their videos contents that immediately engage the audience through small group

discussions. Therefore, my ultimate desire for "The Glitch" is to use this animation as a base and develop small group curriculums for young adults, youth camps, and Vacation Bible Schools. This allows churches and Christian organizations to further use "The Glitch" as a per-evangelism tool to facilitate meaningful dialogues on spiritual truths, especially the importance of having an eternal value system.

Lastly, "The Glitch" will be submitted to different Christian film festivals to exemplify how imaginative storytelling can create an enticing environment that facilitates meaningful dialogue on spiritual truths.

My biggest take away from this project can be summarized in one quote,

> I must keep alive in myself the
> desire for my true country, which
> I shall not find till after death;
> I must make it the main object
> of life to press on to that other
> country and to help others to do
> the same. (Lewis)

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