MENTAL PROCESS NARRATIVE FILM: DESIGN TECHNIQUES FOR VISUALIZING CHARACTER PSYCHE IN ANIMATED SHORTS

Thesis

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By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines elements and techniques for illustrating character subjectivity in animated short films with the goal of creating mental process narrative films.

A mental process narrative film uses character mindset to guide story content, design, and production techniques. Within this paper, I discuss the roles of perceptual and mental subjectivity in developing a mental process narrative film. As an animator, I am interested in the qualities that push the boundaries of the animation medium to stylistically illustrate character mindset. Through primary research, I observed a select number of mainstream live-action, 2D and 3D animated films that incorporate specific techniques for portraying character subjectivity and I present the documentation of these techniques and their use within the Contextual Review section.

As a filmmaker my goal is to employ these techniques as a way of creating viewer identification with characters. Using the documented techniques for illustrating character mindset, I created four applied study films. In the Methodology section of this paper, I describe strategies for incorporating these methods during the planning and story development phases of making three short animated films for the Thurber project. Within the New Studies section, I expand the adaptation of these techniques further, by providing
techniques for creating a mental process narrative film during both the story concept and
film production phases of my thesis film Holly Hype.

I present these applied study films and this documentation as a useful resource for
other animation filmmakers who wish to design a film based around the subjective viewpoint
of a character. In conclusion, I examine successes, failures, and areas for improvement
within the techniques used and suggest further topics for study with mental process
narrative filmmaking.
DEDICATION

Dedicated to my parents who allowed free-thinking and countless hours of cartoon watching and to my teachers who supported my creative endeavors.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank my committee members Ron Green, Sean O’Sullivan, Maria Palazzi, and Alan Price for their expert knowledge and guidance in directing me to appropriate resources that contributed to knowledge gained in this study as well as for their belief in my work and ideas. I especially thank my professors Maria Palazzi and Alan Price who pushed my knowledge and skills beyond what I ever thought were capable.

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I also show appreciation for the rest of my classmates who provided suggestions and feedback during the story development and production phases of the film Holly Hype. And, I am grateful to the ACCAD staff for technical support as well as making the labs a clean and safe environment to work.

Finally I owe a very special thanks to my family and friends for their support, patience, and words of motivation throughout the process of conducting this research.
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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Problem

My research interest lies in the exploration of subjective portrayals in animated short films, and applied to classical Hollywood cinematic conventions that specifically reveals character psyche through an illustration of thought and emotion. Psyche is characteristically the center of contemplation, feeling, and motivation, consciously and unconsciously directing the body's reactions to its social and physical environment (psyche. The American Heritage® Stedman's Medical Dictionary 2008). Mental process narration is a term used by Edward Branigan in his book Point of View in the Cinema: A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film to refer to the existence of a character's mental condition as the unity, or coherence, of the representation (Branigan 1984, 85). I have found that there are various ways to represent a character's mental process when working in the medium of computer-generated animation. When filmmakers use character mindset to guide story content, design, animation and production techniques, I term the product a mental process narrative film. Through practice-based research, I establish a list of techniques to be applied to animated mental process narrative films that engages viewers on an emotional and cognitive level with characters.
Throughout this paper, the word ‘subjective’ or ‘subjectivity’ is used to label specific areas with story where the character’s unique perspective is revealed to the audience. There are two kinds of subjectivity, perceptual and mental. I provide a description of each type and discuss their roles in creating a mental process narrative film. Perceptual subjectivity gives viewers access to what characters see and hear, while mental subjectivity provides access to characters’ thoughts and emotions. Perceptual subjectivity is most often presented through point of view shots, camera movement that replaces the body of the character and optical effects. Mental subjectivity is shown in brief segments within a few mainstream animated films through dream sequences, hallucinations, or imagined thoughts, but is not often incorporated throughout the duration of the film.

With endless possibilities of animation to create settings, characters, and moments that could not be experienced in the real world, there has still been a tendency in the U.S. to re-create reality. As an animator, I have personally observed a pattern of the realist movement in the last decade of animation, resulting from technological developments in 3D animation. Mainstream animated feature films in the U.S. have followed the Disney realistic style of animation by shying away from symbolically representing a character’s mental state and placing more emphasis on photo-realism using techniques from live-action filmmaking. In Chapter 2, I discuss Disney’s influence on mainstream animation that has led to a lack of subjectivity in contemporary 3D animation. I then provide a brief overview of techniques in a few experimental film genres that rebel against the objective reality, as evidence for how they have influenced character-driven, narrative animation. After listing these examples, I examine recent developments in visualizing a character’s mental process within current 3D
films by Disney/Pixar Animation Studios and DreamWorks Animation Studios. However, I note that these non-traditional techniques are not found throughout the films’ entirety.

In the search for writings on techniques that specifically illustrate character point of view within mainstream feature and short-length animation, I have found myself left wanting. The majority of books and articles that discuss mental and perceptual subjectivity in film provide examples of live-action film rather than animation. For example, in the article Observations on Film Art: A Closer Look at Character Subjectivity only 2 animations—The Simpsons and Dumbo—are mentioned out of the 27 live-action films (Bordwell and Thompson 2008). Edward Branigan’s book on subjectivity and Smith’s book on engagement with characters both discuss only live-action film in detail. Moreover, while the book Understanding Animation provides a few examples of subjectivity in animation, it is not the main topic of the book. To search for writings about subjectivity in animated film, I had to first be aware of the film and then search for moments of portraying character mindset within the text, as opposed to searching under subjectivity and then seeing animation examples within that topic. This lack of clear documentation on techniques to visually portray character psyche within animation suggests that applied study films and documentation could be a useful tool for other filmmakers, animators, and writers who wish to design an animation based around subjective viewpoint.

1.2 The Context

In Empathic Engagement with Narrative Fictions, Amy Coplan reviews studies completed by other researchers and concludes that adopting the perspective of fictional characters often plays an important role in viewer’s engagement with the narrative (Coplan 2004).
Although the studies were conducted around reading narrative text, it is clear that when stories are revolved around a character’s subjective thoughts and emotions, readers more easily processed and remembered events. Section 2.4 examines studies on reader response to narrative text from character point of view to provide further evidence for a natural desire to identify with characters. Thus, creating a film that gives viewers access to character’s inner thoughts and feelings can create enjoyable, memorable experiences for audience members.

In *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion and the Cinema* by Murray Smith, identification is a term used to describe the relationship created when viewers become engaged with characters. Fictional narratives elicit three levels of imaginative engagement with characters (Smith 1995, 75). These three structures are recognition, alignment, and allegiance. Each category plays a role in achieving viewer identification. First, recognition develops viewers’ personal perception of a character’s mental and physical attributes and behaviors. Next, alignment places viewers alongside a character within the narrative. Last, allegiance creates a moral and ideological union between viewer and character (Smith 1995, 84). In Chapter 2, I describe these kinds of relationships in which the character acts as a portal for audience entry into an unknown, animated world. Additionally, I discuss viewer identification in relation to my own mental process narrative films *Dog Asleep, Hunting Hounds* and *He Goes with His Owner into Bars* within the Thurber project, and then again in Section 4.3 about the applied study film *Holly Hype*.

After discussing ways that viewers identify with characters, I provide a framework for creating a mental process story as well as specific areas and techniques to represent character mindset in film. According to Murray Smith there are three principal qualities of a narrative story: knowledgeability, communication, and self-consciousness. Knowledgeability refers to
the range and depth of story information; communication reveals character traits and states that viewers may watch develop as events unfold (Smith 1995, 74). And, self-consciousness exists when viewers are provided access to the actions of characters and then denied this access during a crucial moment of the story (Smith 1995, 74). Each factor is broken down in relation to the development of a mental process narrative film. In the last section of Chapter 2, I describe filmmaking techniques of subjective portrayals and the opportunistic areas within the narrative to use these techniques. To examine these methods I use Edward Branigan’s six modes of classical representation in film: origin, vision, time, frame, object, and mind and later present a new list of classical representation in a mental process narrative film that incorporates filmmaking techniques specific to character subjectivity in animation (Section 3.4).

1.3 Why is Portraying Subjectivity Interesting in the Animation Medium?

The topic of portraying subjectivity lends itself well to the animation medium. The book Understanding Animation says that although subjectivity is shown in live-action film, the fluidity of animation more readily supports subjective views, opinions and recollections (Wells 1998, 27). As an animator, I am interested in the qualities that push the boundaries of the animation medium to stylistically illustrate character mindset. Animators and designers have the power to integrate both real and surreal aspects of character mindset in a seamless fashion—as they are not restricted to maintaining the physical properties of objects that exist in the natural world. It is perhaps this unique quality of animation that allows an audience to suspend its disbelief, because viewers are aware that they are observing animation instead of real life. High stylization and a believable incorporation of real and
imaginary points of view are not as easily accomplished in live-action filmmaking, and animation is often used today to complement the film in creating elements of fantasy within a shot. Because I work in the animation medium, exploring techniques of subjective portrayals—where ideas and emotions are represented through indirect expression—is particularly interesting.

The term penetration, where the inner workings of an organism are shown, is used to describe the approach of revealing character mindset (Wells 1998, 122). Unique to animation, penetration is a tool that reveals conditions or principles that are hidden or beyond the comprehension of the viewer and allows animators to operate beyond the confines of the dominant modes of representation (Wells 1998, 122). Inner thoughts and emotions can be communicated in more ways than simple dialogue or facial expressions. A character's intangible point of view can be transformed into concrete illustrations within animation (Figure 1.2).
1.4 Why is Portraying Subjectivity Valuable to Filmmakers?

In the article “Empathic Engagement with Narrative Fictions,” Coplan reviews particular empirical studies completed by other researchers that suggests how readers often adopt the perspective of one or more characters in fictional narratives, and concludes that empathy with these characters has a higher resonance in memory as opposed to receiving information from a more objective point of view (Coplan 2004). In her research, she found that adopting the perspective of fictional characters often plays an important role in viewer's engagement with the narrative. A study by Rinck and Bower, which ran a series of experiments focusing on a reader’s attention, concluded that readers experienced narratives from the spatiotemporal standpoint of the protagonist (Coplan 2004). Thus, when readers adopt the point of view of a particular character early on in a narrative, succeeding events from the character’s point of view will be more easily processed and remembered. Although these studies are about literature rather than film, they provide concrete evidence that presenting the audience with the subjective point of view of a character creates a more memorable experience than an objective point of view.
1.5 The Method

As a practice-based researcher, I studied a select number of mainstream 2D, 3D, and live-action films that use techniques that illustrate character subjectivity. While I focused most on American mainstream narrative film, I recognize that experimental filmmaking techniques influenced these Hollywood cinematic conventions. Using identified techniques for producing a mental process narrative film, I created example films as a means of applying the learned subjective techniques into my filmmaking practice. As explained in Section 3.1, results are accomplished through an emergent methodology in which animation stories are grounded in research, observation of existing films, and contextual review, while producing the short films is accomplished through a process of reflection in and on action.

To document knowledge gained, I created a series of charts that list the classical techniques for subjective portrayal as I came to know them over time. In Section 3.2, I present a chart of initial observations in common trends that portray a character’s mindset. I also provide hand-drawn visualizations and then a re-fined chart of observed subjective portrayal techniques in film. In Section 3.3, I present methodologies for making three applied study films in the Thurber project that focus on applying subjective techniques to the story development process. First, I list research conducted to develop each story concept, and I discuss applied techniques of illustrating character mindset within each film. I then analyze the outcomes of these films and discuss successes, failures, and areas for improvement. After this initial research, experimentation and review, I provide a final chart titled *Elements and Techniques of a Mental Process Narrative Film* (Tables 5–11). This chart organizes a list of areas and techniques that incorporate subjectivity into film so that other
filmmakers may refer to them during the conceptual development, production, and post-production phases of filmmaking.

In Chapter 4, I provide an analysis on the making of my mental process thesis film, *Holly Hype* that demonstrates techniques within various areas of this final chart. The film includes an original character, story, and musical score. In the first section, I discuss film research conducted to develop ideas for an original story concept with a theme of illustrating real vs. imagined events. I present various story versions and discuss successes, failures, and areas for improvement within each concept, before arriving at a final story. As discussion of my final narrative, I provide a breakdown analysis of each area of subjectivity within my developed chart (Tables 5–11) and list particular techniques used within the chart. Upon receiving feedback from others and through analysis as a viewer myself, I draw several conclusions about viewer identification achieved from the animatic and final *Holly Hype* film and I present these in Section 4.3.

### 1.6 The Outcomes

The Thurber applied study films produced are stories created after initial observations and research in character subjectivity, while *Holly Hype* was developed with a more informed body of knowledge about techniques that illustrate character mental process in film. From the Thurber films, I concluded that it is significant to customize observed subjective portrayal techniques according to the uniqueness of the story and character. I also found that contributions to the subject of creating a mental process narrative film can also be achieved from a realization of what hasn’t been done or is not often done. Within the Thurber project, new discoveries were made only during the story development phase for
the animations. The process of making my thesis film *Holly Hype* supported the exploration of new discoveries in portraying mental subjectivity during both the story development and production phases. *Holly Hype* adds a dimension of design, color and style to illustrate character subjectivity that the Thurber films did not provide. In Chapter 5, I discuss the outcomes of each applied study and analyze the methods used to create each film.

Although I explore various methods and visual examples of techniques to create a mental process narrative film, there are still areas for further exploration. Surveying every example or movement in film history that visualizes character mindset in both mainstream and experimental film is not within the scope of this study. This paper is designed to offer readers specific examples of subjective portrayal techniques in film, using the vocabulary of filmmaking practices in classical Hollywood cinema. My work resides within the framework of a character-driven, linear narrative using animation as the medium for representation. I invite readers to consider other areas in which subjectivity might be revealed and to compare how these techniques are used in traditional and non-traditional filmmaking practices.
CHAPTER 2 CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

2.1 Defining Mental Process Narrative Film and Subjectivity

Mental process narration is a term by Edward Branigan to refer to classical representation in film where the character’s mental condition is the unity or coherence of representation (Branigan 1984, 85). He limits his discussion of mental process narration to the incorporation of subjectivity within dreams and memory sequences in live-action film. In my study, I observe techniques of portraying a character's mental process in both animated and live-action film. Within my applied studies, I illustrate subjectivity through the medium of computer animation. Through observation and practice, I have found that there are various methods of moving the audience to a subjective point of view beyond the constraints of dream and memory sequences. These cinematic methods, based in classical film structure and related to Branigan's principles also take advantage of the qualities that are inherent to the animation medium.

When viewers observe events through the specificity of a character in a film, this deviates from how other characters or other viewers might experience the event, thus the occurrence moves from an objective to subjective view. In these specific instances of narration, where the telling of information is attributed to a character in the narrative and
received by viewers as if they were in the situation of the character, Branigan refers to this as
subjectivity (Branigan 1984, 73). Thompson and Bordwell make a distinction between
subjective views of a character’s literal sight and of the character’s inner thoughts and
feelings. The authors label these two methods perceptual and mental subjectivity (Bordwell
and Thompson 2008).

Perceptual subjectivity is defined as giving viewers access to what characters see and
hear (Bordwell and Thompson 2008). Filmmakers often accomplish this by using a point-of-
view ‘POV’ shot. The POV shot is a literal translation of the character’s line of sight in
which the camera becomes the eyes of the character. Viewers may also experience perceptual
subjectivity through an optical effect such as skewing the vision of the frame, or through
camera movement that takes the place of the character’s body (Figure 2.1). It is important to
note that these physical effects do not give viewers access to a character’s thoughts or
feelings. Instead, the audience is provided an ‘in his shoes’ experience as the character.

Figure 2.1. Examples of optical effects and POV shots (Left) Kung Fu Panda, 2008 (Right)
The 39 Steps, 1937
Mental subjectivity provides the audience with access to a character’s memory, inner voices, fantasy, dreams, and hallucinations (Bordwell and Thompson 2008). Deviating from perceptual subjectivity, mental subjectivity provides a view of why or in what way a character sees, feels, and thinks. The camera shot used to illustrate this type of subjectivity are the termed the perception shot, metaphorical framing, or the subjective camera. Within my applied study films, I emphasize mental subjectivity in animation to provide a deeper psychological perspective of the character rather than a direct translation of reality. And, I integrate examples and techniques of perceptual subjectivity in the short animated films, to provide additional reinforcement of being in the world of the character as opposed to just an outsider looking in.

Figure 2.2. Examples of mental subjectivity (Left) Ryan, 2004 (Right) Félix the Cat Meets the Mischievous Ones

2.2 Recognizing the Problem

John Belton states that classical Hollywood cinema is a character-centered cinema that places emphasis on structuring narratives around the goals of individual characters
Conventions within the classical Hollywood cinema follow a specific mode of production that enable stories to be told through continuity editing, which makes the cut invisible, and they offer a continuous, linear, and unified construction of space and time, where stories typically have a beginning, middle and end (Belton 1994). Working from the perspective of feature filmmaking techniques in mainstream cinema to create a mental process narrative film becomes problematic in that information about characters is often revealed through external, objective points of view. And, when moments of subjectivity do occur, they are often in views that utilize perceptual subjectivity or limited amounts of mental subjectivity that are not incorporated throughout the duration of the film.

Within the medium of animation, which possesses endless possibilities to create worlds, characters, and moments that could not be experienced in reality, there has still been a tendency in commercial animated features to re-create and mimic the real world through photorealistic movement, lighting, texture, settings and imagery (Figure 2.3). Viewers are given an endless amount of technically sophisticated facial expressions and camera work as perceptual subjectivity, but in the current structure of cinematic conventions in American mainstream, feature animation, there is little abstraction, stylization, or metaphorical representation of character thought presented as mental subjectivity. This lack of abstract expressivity in commercial feature animation began in 2D animation with Disney’s use of rotoscoping, multiplane cameras, color, sound, and organized production pipelines. These technological innovations allowed Disney feature animation to be aligned with mainstream live-action filmmaking techniques, which focused on portraying objective reality.
2.2.1 Disney’s Influence on 2D Animation

As technology advanced around the early 1930s, Disney moved away from the expressivity of their earlier cartoons and began creating realistic forms, movement, and stories that were felt to be more believable and/or probable to viewers (Wells 1998, 23). Production, story and animation techniques for cartoons and full-length features borrowed techniques from live-action filmmaking. Disney’s animators underwent programs of training in the skills and techniques of fine art in the constant drive towards achieving realism (Wells 1998, 24). Because animals had to move like real animals and people had to move like real people (Figure 2.4), rotoscoping, an animation technique where animators trace over live-action film movement frame by frame, was used in a variety of popular Disney films such as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs and Cinderella. Along with Disney’s development of the multiplane camera setup, where the camera looks down through several layers of drawings, perspective and camera movement in animation were aligned with photographic realism (Maltin 1987).
As the 2D animated film reached maturity, the ever popular Disney had become synonymous with ‘animation,’ which led animation to be understood in a limited way (Wells 1998, 24). Max Fleischer, creator of Betty Boop, Koko the Clown and Popeye, commented on the ‘Disneyfication’ of the animation medium by stating “The animated oil painting has taken the place of the flashiness and delightfulfulness of the simple cartoon…It was and still is in my opinion that the cartoon should represent the cartoonist’s mental expression and thus resist the tendency towards realism (Graeme and Stone 78).” Animation had become associated with a company that aligned the medium with photographic realism and filmmaking conventions in classic Hollywood live-action cinema, which overshadowed other types of innovation and styles that were more expressive, abstract or metaphorical. Thus, the allowance for an illustration of mental subjectivity – deviant from real occurrences and photorealism – became extremely limited in animated feature films.

Figure 2.4. (Left) Rotoscoping used in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (Right) Real deer brought into the studio for Bambi animators.

(Left) Rotoscoping used in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (Right) Real deer brought into the studio for Bambi animators.
2.2.2 Disney/Pixar’s Influence on 3D Animation

It may be argued that Disney’s hyper-realist animated film style remains the dominant discourse of animation (Wells 1998, 35). For the past decade, there have been great strides in the advancement of 3D technology and the ability to create photorealistic imagery. Mainstream 3D feature-length films seem to follow the Disney realist movement placing high emphasis on using the technology to create believable and realistic renderings. Just as the advancement of technology in 2D animation allowed Disney to better align themselves to live-action filmmaking practices, 3D animation technology provides filmmakers with digital cameras, lenses, lights and effects that mimic those the physical world. Because of 3D animation’s grounding in live-action filmmaking techniques, mainstream animated features naturally lean toward realistic imagery. This in turn, does not leave a lot of room for portrayals of mental subjectivity through more abstracted, symbolic, expressive techniques of filmmaking.

Steve May, a Technical Director from Pixar Animation Studios visited the Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design (ACCAD) at The Ohio State University in Spring 2009, just after the production of *Up*. While describing the process of creating the balloons that would lift Carl Fredricksen’s house, he stated that manipulating the balloons in an unnatural way would take away from the believability of the story, which they didn’t want. He said that Pixar still follows the basic animation principals developed by Disney, and places importance on objects moving and behaving realistically in order to be accepted by viewers. This may be due to the fact that in the U.S., we are used to seeing Disney conventions of portraying photorealistic settings and movement. Because of 3D animation’s grounding in live-action filmmaking techniques, mainstream animated features naturally lean
toward realistic imagery. This in turn, does not leave a lot of room for portrayals of mental subjectivity through more abstracted, symbolic, expressive techniques of filmmaking.

As the 3D animated film has reached maturity, Disney/Pixar have become synonymous with ‘3D animation,’ leading this medium to be understood in a limited way, just as the ‘Disneyfication’ of 2D animation occurred. DreamWorks Animation also follows similar principles to Pixar in utilizing the technology to create photorealistic renders and borrowing from live-action film techniques to create a 3D animated film. In 1995, Pixar Studios released the first 3D feature film *Toy Story*, which is about real toys that are alive in the real world; thus, settings, toys and humans are meant to look and behave as such. A decade later, Pixar’s release of *Wall-E* revolves around a real robot in the real world that has been destroyed by humans, thus all settings and machines look photorealistic (Figure 2.5) In DreamWorks’s *Shrek*, the story is about fairy tales and made up worlds, but settings are designed to mimic realistic and well-known cities, shops, and houses (Figure 2.6). Frequently, mental subjectivity is only portrayed in segments of dreams and hallucinations rather than incorporated throughout the duration of the film. These subjective scenes have origins in experimental filmmaking, which uses symbolic imagery, free association, and often violates time and space.
2.2.3 Film Genres that Disobey Traditional Hollywood Cinematic Conventions to Portray Subjective, Internal Thought

Throughout the history of American film and animation, there are significant genres of film that disobey the systematic approach of conveying objective reality in mainstream cinema. Avant-garde live-action film such as German expressionism and surrealism, visually represent subjective portrayal through design, sound and editing techniques.

Limited animation, deriving from a desire to rebel against the Disneyfication of animation,
uses a graphic approach to represent character thought and personality. These experimental film genres offer a different kind of viewing experience than commercial films, with imagery that represents internal, subconscious thought that stimulates the imagination of audiences.

The avant-garde or experimental cinema violates conventions of classical Hollywood filmmaking by using elements that exist outside of the constraints of hierarchy and order. It makes conscious use of materials of cinema that calls attention to the medium through incorporation of symbolic imagery, alteration of camera movements, lenses, lighting, time and space, and does not always make clear narrative sense or provide a definitive message to the audience (Baker 2006). While it is not within the scope of this paper to list every genre in film history that illustrates character mindset, it is important to recognize that techniques used within experimental film have shaped and influenced traditional filmmaking practices of narrative story structure within both live-action and animation. In the sections below, I provide a brief overview of principles and techniques in a few of these experimental film genres as examples for how they are incorporated into a linear structure of character-driven narrative film that visualizes character psyche.

2.2.3.1 German Expressionism

**German expressionism** arose in the 1920s and 1930s by filmmakers who used composition, sets, props, actors, costumes and lighting to add mood and meaning (German Expressionism 2010). Their films possessed a theatrical look, using dramatic painted scenery and make-up. Set design used asymmetrical geometric shapes, painterly objects, and high contrasting black and white colors that created exaggerated shadow and light. Story themes are often focused on darker subjects such as the supernatural, insanity and betrayal (Read
Motion pictures from this film genre, such as the 1920 film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, directed by Robert Wiene, which used styling aimed at enhancing a subjective, emotional experience by distorting the objective reality (Figure 2.7). Specific techniques in German Expressionist film include chiaroscuro lighting, having a preoccupation with reflective surfaces, using anthropomorphism or the attribution of the human form and characteristics to nonhuman things, and using optical tricks and abstractionism (West 2005). All of these techniques allow for a representation of subjective reality. The principals of German Expressionism that use mise-en-scene to enhance mood and illustrate subjective thought are incorporated throughout multiple contemporary mainstream live-action and animated film.

Within the animation medium, the influence of German Expressionism is apparent in the work of Tim Burton, who draws from techniques of the experimental film and incorporates them into mainstream cinematic conventions. In his 1982 animated short, *Vincent*, it is clear that his use of character design, high contrasting black and white colors, shadows, and absurdly-shaped set design draws from influences of the theatrical setting in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Figure 2.8). In *Vincent*, these distinct characteristics originally used in experimental film are applied to the character-driven, narrative animation to illustrate the subjective mindset of the character Vincent. While Vincent’s real world is represented through naturalistic settings, his subjective world is represented in an expressionist style.
2.2.3.2 Surrealist Film

Another film genre that disobeyed traditional mainstream filmmaking practices of the time was the **surrealist** movement that formed in the 1920s and reached the U.S. in 1931. This film genre grew out of the desire to create new imagery that questioned the status quo and deconstructed the systematic ways of seeing and thinking. The new artistic strategy “exposed psychological truth by stripping ordinary objects of their normal significance, in order to create a compelling image that is beyond ordinary formal organization (From Surrealism to Fantastic Art n.d.).” Surrealism is intended to express the process of thought. The movement arose in opposition to conventional forms of narrative and realistic storytelling as they sought to shock the subconscious through the use of non-
sequential images dealing with death, sexual desire, cruelty and violence (Surrealist Film 2010). Because surrealists prioritize a psychological, rather than photorealistic approach to filmmaking, the stylistic method helped to reaffirm film as medium for artistic expression rather than just a simple translation of reality. For this reason, the surrealist movement is important to address when discussing techniques of creating a mental process narrative film.

Surrealism also places emphasis on intermixing the real and the imagined, thus existing as an example for representations of subjective portrayal in film. In a lecture organized by Belgian Surrealists in 1934, André Breton says that it is the supreme aim of surrealists to present interior reality and exterior reality as two elements in unification. “We have assigned to ourselves the task of confronting these two realities with one another, acting on the one and on the other both at once” (Breton 1934). Viewers are challenged to accept and embrace the irrational. Surrealism is more than a method; it is an entire movement concerned with expanding the definition of reality by liberating the imagination (Charney & Schwartz 78).

With respect to the animation medium, Donald Crafton says that although the creators of early animations were not considered ‘surrealists’ at the time, they made films that demonstrated a disregard for everyday existence, and normal logic, and they had a propensity for dreamlike action that Breton and his followers admired. For example, Felix the Cat films in the 1920s are often linked with surrealism through the creation of stories that transport viewers into a sub reality, where no boundaries exist between the real and imagined. Like surrealist films that embrace the illogical as a part of reality, Felix never shies away from the irrational; he accepts it as ordinary (Crafton 1993, 342). Felix’s creator, Otto Messmer used metamorphosis and metaphor to illustrate abstract concepts of character
psyche. Felix is far removed from reality of everyday cats, and possesses expressive body parts that may be removed and manipulated according to his mental state. Representations of his subconscious thought become concrete objects that can be interacted with and manipulated (Figure 2.9). The cartoons also visually illustrate abstract, invisible concepts of the subconscious by distorting the environment (Figure 2.10). In possessing these surrealist techniques used to identify character perspective within a character-driven narrative animation, Messmer’s Felix plays an important role among the predecessors of subjective portrayal in animation. Throughout this research, I looked to early Felix animations as examples of techniques that illustrate mental subjectivity.

Figure 2.9. A question mark becomes a fishing hook

Figure 2.10. Felix’s environment appears distorted and includes oddly placed objects
The most obvious influence of surrealist film on classical Hollywood film is the inclusion of the bizarre, fantasy, use of non-linear time and illustration of subconscious thought within dream sequences, hallucinations, flashbacks and imagined segments of a character. Within mainstream film today, these magical, dream-like, and/or illogical appearances are labeled surrealist, because they are not within viewers’ index of reality. In my applied study films, I utilized this method of blending together reality and dream, conscious and the unconscious to represent a character’s subjective mindset. However, because these stories use linear time, continuity, order, and reason behind deviations from reality, the films cannot be considered surrealist in the traditional sense of the definition, as they sit within the framework of classical cinematic conventions.

2.2.3.3 Limited Animation

The United Productions of America was founded during a Disney animator’s strike in 1941. Artists that had received training from the Walt Disney studio left the company and eventually joined forces to become UPA. These ex-Disney animators were unhappy with the ultra-realistic style of animation that Disney had been advocating. They believed that animation didn’t have to be photorealistic and shouldn’t be constrained by cinematic reality (United Productions of America 2010). The animations they created were characterized by graphic, stylized figures, and an incorporation of various styles and shapes. This method came to be known as limited animation. Animators experimented with character design, depth, and perspective to create a stylized artistic vision appropriate to the subject matter. They placed emphasis on conveying the message rather than re-creating reality, thereby resulting in a marriage of form and content within their work. This method of animating
was a return to the traditional principles in animation, breaking from the formulaic approach brought on by Disney realism.

Limited animation does not serve to place viewers within the real world, but instead calls attention to the animation medium. *Gerald McBoing-Boing* and *Christopher Crumpet* are two examples of a unification of style and content. First, in 1951, UPA produced a short animation called *Gerald McBoing-Boing*. Within this film, animators produced a style that came out of the story material, and they aimed for simplicity to place emphasis on the message. A representation of this stylistic approach can be found in the use of background colors as well as colors of the characters skin and/or clothes that alter according to character mood (Figure 2.11). In the beginning of the film, Gerald is happy and colors within the frame are bright yellows and greens. After he is rejected from school, colors become darker orange and brown. Shortly following, he runs away from home, and day turns into night using dark blue colors. At the moment when the radio executive expresses interest in his special talent, the colors brighten again and the film ends on a happy note in bright yellows and greens. Environments and props are used minimally. This film provided me with an example of a character-based animation that utilizes stylization of color and perspective as a technique to convey character mindset. This is a method that I incorporate into my own applied study film *Holly Hype.*
The 1953 UPA film *Christopher Crumpet* by Steven Bosustow and Robert Cannon provides an example of a graphic approach to character animation that explicitly utilizes expressive character design and manipulation as an expression of character psyche. This short film revolves around a young boy with a big imagination who turns into a cackling chicken when he doesn’t get his way. When throwing a temper tantrum, he transforms into a chicken in real life (Figure 2.12). Between shape-shifting from human to animal, his body becomes a jumbled mess of scribbles, which graphically illustrates the change of mindset from calm to angry. The chicken is used to symbolically represent Christopher’s childish behavior. This film revolves around one particular character whose imagination becomes reality, thus providing viewers with a subjective point of view. This film provided me with an example of a character-based animation that utilizes stylization and manipulation of
character as a technique to convey character mindset. This is a method that I also incorporate into my thesis film *Holly Hype*.

![Figure 2.12. Christopher Crumpet throws a tantrum and transforms into a chicken](image)

*Gerald McBoing-Boing* won an Oscar and *Christopher Crumpet* received an academy award nomination, which gave legitimacy to the limited animation technique in Hollywood circles (Alegre 2009). UPA was more than just the name of a company, and by the 1950s the term “UPA animation” was a way to describe modern animation that broke from the Disney-type literalism (Maltin 1987, 340). With this reputation, limited animation had a significant impact on animation style, content, and technique. Soon producers of American television commercials, and even major theatrical studios like Warner Bros and MGM changed their design approach to keep pace with UPA (Maltin 1987, 340). Even Disney created a few shorts that utilized the limited animation style of UPA.

*Limited animation expanded the horizons of animation and provided opportunities for expressing the psychological through design. UPA expressed the desire to return to a more graphic approach of animating in order to convey a message and to incorporate mental subjective portrayals. Presently in mainstream computer-animated features, it seems that history has repeated itself, as we are again overpowered by literal representations of*
reality in the 3D medium. Now having mastered the photo-real computer-generated imagery, there is a desire to move away from the systematic approach and return to stylistic interpretations of animation that focus on a unification of form and content.

2.2.3.4 Chris Landreth’s Psychorealism in Ryan: The Inclusion of Mental Subjectivity in a Contemporary 3D Short Animation

The term psychorealism was introduced by animator Chris Landreth as a description to the technique used in his 2004 short film Ryan. Psychorealism refers to the visualization of character psyche. Landreth develops his own methods of distorting reality based on characters’ mindset, mood, memories, and visible effects of both past and present experiences. As an attempt to deviate from conventional techniques in mainstream Hollywood animation that portrays objective reality, he states, “What I’m most interested in is not achieving photorealism in CGI, but in co-opting elements of photorealism to serve a different purpose to expose the realism of the incredibly complex, messy, chaotic, sometimes mundane, and always conflicted quality we call human nature” (Robertson 2004, 15). The film is a documentary about a popular artist in the 60s and 70s named Ryan Larkin, who eventually became homeless and suffered from drug and alcohol abuse. The interviewer Chris and the artist Ryan, are visually represented as concrete products of their own psyche (Figure 2.13).
By using a basis of reality, Chris was able to manipulate environment and character to create a new, psychorealism based on the physical and emotional states, from both past and present tense influences, of the characters. This idea of creating psychorealism is extremely valid to my study on creating a mental process narrative film in that emphasis is placed on a depiction of the character’s subjective world rather than a recreation of viewers own objective reality. Within the film, Chris and Ryan’s faces possess gouges and growths to represent past and present experiences as well as to outwardly express his psychological state of mind. Geometry that makes up the human model becomes more complete, abstract, and even sharper depending on a characters’ state of mind (Figure 2.14). Movement is also manipulated to reflect mental subjectivity of the characters. When characters are calm, movement of ligaments and gestures seems fairly structured. However, as the characters grow angry or upset, movement becomes more and more fluid, as if the models were made of jell-o. Animation and deformities also act as an additive element to the subconscious and conscious thought process of characters (Figure 2.15). Throughout the interview these
augmentations serve as visual metaphors, acting as “a third narrative voice that's sometimes a critic and sometimes a participant” (Robertson 2004, 16).

Figure 2.14. The distortion on Ryan's face reflects his thought and mood

Figure 2.15. Geometry is added to characters and props, representing the presence of subconscious thought

Secondary characters and the setting in the film are also represented through the subjective point of view of interviewer and interviewee. Chris discusses how he wanted to show Derek and Felicity, other interviewed characters, as Ryan perceives them, rather than
through photorealistic representations (Robertson 2004, 18). To accomplish this point of view, a 2D drawing is mapped onto a 3D surface (Figure 2.16). Chris used Ryan’s actual drawings of them to produce a style that stays true to Ryan’s current point of view and work. Chris also briefly discusses the use of non-linear perspective and paint effects to give the rendered image a “dreamy, disorienting space, which reflects the skewed states” of the characters (Robertson 2004, 16).

Figure 2.16. Felicity shown as a copy of Ryan’s drawing of her

Psychorealism is not a complete removal from reality, but like surrealism it uses reality as a basis for manipulation and transformation. Psychorealism in Ryan is important to address in the study of creating a mental process narrative film, as it was a defiance against the hyper-realistic, objective approach to storytelling in mainstream 3D animation. The film won several awards, thus gaining recognition in mainstream animation, and the story and technique has resonated among critics, filmmakers, and audiences alike. Robertson gives merit to Chris’s new methods by stating, “in creating emotional realism rather than photorealism, he dares directors, animators, and computer graphics professionals to think
beyond cartoon animation, creature animation, and digital doubles.” Chris Landreth explored new methods of animated documentary filmmaking in psychorealism, expressed through movement and illustrating the invisible.

2.2.4 The Inclusion of Mental Subjectivity in Current Mainstream Feature Animation

In a Speech about the future of computer graphics at SIGGRAPH 2009, Pixar’s Rob Cook questioned, “Have we already explored most of the graphics continent?…We have largely solved an impressive number of hard problems: seeing complexity, surface appearance, lighting, camera effects, and simulations (Cook 2009).” Cook was inviting us to think about what else in the field of computer graphics should be explored now that we have achieved photo-realism. As technology has enabled this accomplishment, there have been attempts to use expressive, stylized, and abstract visualizations to indicate character point of view in mainstream 3D animation. In recent popular 3D films such as Ratatouille, Kung Fu Panda, and Horton Hears a Who, and Day & Night, 2D animation has been successfully incorporated to indicate a character’s imagined thoughts. However, these occurrences only appear in a few instances rather than being incorporated throughout the film.

For example, in Pixar’s 2007 film Ratatouille, Remy tries to explain the taste of particular foods, but taste is not easily verbally expressed. Thus, to visually express his mental state while taking a bite, graphic shapes and waves appear beside him along with a sequence of music matching the mood. This technique is only used twice in the film (Figure 2.17). DreamWorks Animation and Blue Sky Studios used 2D animation to show a 3D character’s thoughts. In DreamWork’s Kung Fu Panda, 2D animated sequence is used to illustrate Po’s
dream, a Panda bear who wishes to become a kung fu master. However, this is the only instance of complete mental subjectivity before returning to a photorealistic world for the remainder of the film (Figure 2.18). In Blue Sky Studio’s *Horton Hears a Who*, 2D animation is used to illustrate Horton’s imagination of the yelps coming from the tiny speck. The second instance of 2D animation illustrates Horton’s warrior mindset while guarding the speck—created in the style of an anime cartoon (Figure 2.19). These sequences transport the audience to an understanding of the character’s experience by revealing character psyche on a deeper, expressive, stylistic, and symbolic level.

Figure 2.17. Illustration of taste in *Ratatouille*, 2007.
During the course of this study, Pixar released a short film called *Day & Night*, in which mental subjectivity is incorporated throughout the duration of the film. Using 2D abstract characters that have 3D animation interiors, most, but not all colors, music, props and events that occur within their bodies reflect the character’s outward facial expressions and feelings (Figure 2.20). The style of the film is clearly influenced by UPA. While the films above provide examples of illustrating subjectivity within the structure of a mainstream character-driven narrative, they do not incorporate these non-traditional techniques.
throughout the duration of the story, as can be found in experimental films. As a filmmaker within the medium of animation, I am searching for distinctive techniques that illustrate subjective thought and ways to include them into a classical structure of mainstream film.

Figure 2.20. *Day & Night*, 2010

2.3 Ways Viewers Identify with Characters in Film

Our entry into narrative structures is mediated by character (Smith 1995, 18). In narrative film, it is common for engagement within the story to be influenced by the type of relationship developed between spectator and character. Fictional narratives elicit three levels of imaginative engagement with characters, distinct types of responses placed under the term identification (Smith 1995, 75). The three structures that make up identification are recognition, alignment, and allegiance (Table 1). The term identification is misleading because it is often mistaken as feeling exactly as the character feels; however, identification encompasses a variety of ways that viewers may be engaged with characters.
Table 1. Murray Smith’s chart of character engagement

Within the first mode of identification, recognition consists of viewers’ personal perception or construction of a character’s mental and physical attributes and behaviors. Recognition is a prerequisite for alignment (Smith 1995, 144). Recognition introduces viewers to the character, and gives them an understanding about the characters’ identity. In the second mode of identification, alignment relates to the process in which spectators are placed alongside a character within the narrative; there are two ways this may be accomplished. First, spatial attachment concerns the ability of the narration to restrict itself to the actions of either a single character or to move freely among two or more characters (Smith 1995, 143). The next type of alignment, within the categories of identification, is subjective access. This pertains to the amount of access a spectator has to the subjective mindset of the character. For the purpose of my study, I emphasize this type of alignment to produce my film and to promote identification with characters.
Allegiance is the last structure of identification. Allegiance goes beyond the surface of
the narration, to create a moral and ideological union between spectator and character
(Smith 1995, 84). Recognition and alignment require that the spectator understands the traits
and mental states that make up the character, while with allegiance viewers evaluate and
respond emotionally to the traits and emotions of the character (Smith 1994, 42). According
to Smith, allegiance depends on recognizing a character, having significant access to the
character’s state of mind, understanding the context behind the character’s actions, and
morally evaluating the character based on that knowledge. This is perhaps one of the most
important aspects in truly identifying with a character, as it requires moving beyond a simple
understanding of the character into responding emotionally with the character. With
alignment, spectators share the character’s path; with allegiance they share the characters
morals and values (Smith 1995, 117). Although Smith separates empathy and sympathy into
categories of central and acentral imagining, imagining “as” the character or “with” the
character, for the purpose of my study this division is not important because they both
involve a developed emotional relationship between spectator and character. Thus, I place
sympathy and empathy both under allegiance.

With sympathy, viewers cognitively recognize an emotion and then respond with an
emotion based on their evaluation of the character (Smith 102). With empathy, viewers
simulate or experience the same emotion as the character (Smith 102). Sympathy means to
feel for, while empathy means to feel with the character. Richard Wollheim states that
empathy ensures that the audience’s mental states and the mental states of the protagonist
are in unison, thus further engaging the viewer in the story (Smith 68). Within my own short
films, I use mental and perceptual subjectivity to achieve various types of identification and
gain a sense of sympathy and/or empathy with the character to further engage viewers on an emotional and cognitive level. Within Murray Smith’s writings, moving beyond the perceptual and into the mental realm of subjectivity to achieve a strong sense of viewer identification and enjoyment is stressed.

2.4 Defining a Structure for a Mental Process Narrative

In order to create my animated films, it was important to first understand the framework of a subjective, mental process narrative. Murray Smith states that narration may be described in terms of three principal qualities: knowledgeability, communication, and self-consciousness (Smith 1995, 74). Depending upon the depth and range of these qualities, narration will either contribute to or detract from viewer identification or connectedness with characters. Knowledgeability refers to the range and depth of story information. The narration may have a range of moving between many characters—omniscient point of view—or may restrict itself to the actions of a single character—selective omniscient or limited omniscient point of view. Through observation of films as well as conducting applied studies, I have found that viewer identification in short film comes best from knowledgeability in a selective omniscient point of view.

In short film, it is important to quickly promote recognition and alliance with the character. Knowledgeability provides access not only to the objective world of the story but the subjective experiences of characters (Smith 1995, 74). This characteristic of narration is at the heart of my study, as subjective portrayal is an important method for achieving a high level of viewer identification with characters. The second principal quality of narration is communication. Communication reveals character traits and states that viewers may watch
develop as events unfold (Smith 1995, 74). This aspect of narration is important in promoting recognition of a character. Comprehension of a character’s physical and mental being, especially early in the story, is important for viewers to develop a sense of the character’s desires, needs, likes and dislikes. This helps promote empathy for a character as these qualities are tested.

Self-consciousness is the last of the qualities of narration. This factor exists when viewers are provided access to character’s actions and then denied this access during a crucial moment of the story (Smith 1995, 74). In my applied studies of a mental process narrative film, this quality of self-consciousness did not help to promote identification with characters, but instead existed as a hindrance. Denying viewers information about the character may result in a broken bond, which is especially detrimental in the format of a short film where the information given and events taking place occur in a short amount of time.

2.5 Defining a Structure for a Mental Process Narrative Film: Elements of Classical Representation in Film

To understand filmmaking techniques of subjective portrayals, I closely examined Edward Branigan’s elements of classical representation in the visual arts. According to Branigan, there are six modes of representation: origin, vision, time, frame, object, and mind (Table 2). To establish a set of techniques of subjective portrayals specific to computer-generated short films, I examine Branigan’s modes and then adapt related or new modes that take advantage of the animation medium to create my own chart on elements of a mental process narrative film.
Table 2. Edward Branigan’s list of elements of classical representation in film

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>origin</td>
<td>The origin is that beginning point or source of the space from which the representation derives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vision</td>
<td>Vision is a force: the activating instance or cause (the gaze) which brings representation into being from an origin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time</td>
<td>Time is a process which links the units of representation into a whole — a continuity — or specifies where the units are not whole — a discontinuity. It is the measure and logic of a sequence, or succession, of framed parts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frame</td>
<td>The frame is a perceptual limit or boundary which divides what is represented from what is not represented with respect to (from) an origin: Here it is (and not there). The frame is the measure and logic of the simultaneity of parts. To frame is to bracket an array using some principle (see below, mind) of exclusion/inclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>object</td>
<td>The object is that which is represented; that which is revealed (framed) as the object of vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mind</td>
<td>Mind is that condition of consciousness — sentience — which is represented as (not is) the principle of coherence of the representation. That is, inscribed within the representation is the principle of its own intelligibility, the logic of its appearance before us. For example, the object appears because it is represented as a memory or because it is represented as it ‘normally’ appears to us.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Branigan’s first mode of representation is **origin**, which is referred to as the “beginning point or source of space from which the representation derives” (Branigan 1984, 57). This term answers the question, from whom is the representation being made? Thus, origin may be considered the point of view from which the story is told. The next element of classical representation described by Branigan is **vision**. This is the activating instance or cause that brings representation into being from an origin (Branigan 1984, 57). By describing vision as an ‘activating instance,’ Branigan suggests that there is always a device that triggers an exchange of point of view at some moment in the film. An example is: an objective view
is used to show a character sitting in a chair. The character looks up, and the view changes to a subjective point of view shot of what the character sees. The vision, in this instance, is the character’s gaze triggering the change in point of view.

**Time** is Branigan’s third mode of classical representation. He describes time as a process that links the units of representation to a whole, which is essentially the continuity of the film. Time is broken into units of past, present, future, and undefined time (Branigan 1984, 98). Present tense is characterized by an illustration of immediate character responses, stream of consciousness, and perception of current events. Past tense events are situations that have already occurred, which is often shown via memories and flashbacks. Future events are moments that may or will occur and are often shown via flashforwards, predictions, fears, and thoughts. Undefined time exists when viewers are unsure of the time period or duration in which events are taking place. Undefined time is typically shown via dreams or hallucinations and uses elliptical editing, where shot transitions omit parts of an event causing an ellipse in plot and story duration. Each example given is considered a subjective portrayal, because the representations are coming specifically from a character’s mind.

**Object** is another mode in Branigan’s elements of classical representation. The object is the subjective aspect being represented to viewers (Branigan 1984, 57). This element has a limitless number of possibilities and exists on a variety of levels depending on the story. In Norman Friedman’s definition of selective omniscience point of view, the object is the level of consciousness being revealed. In the topic of character psyche, the object is a thought, emotion, or association of the character. For example, if a character is drunk while inside at a bar and imagines seeing blurred pink elephants, the elephants would be considered the objects of subjective representation.
The fifth mode of representation in Branigan’s list is **frame**. He defines frame as a “perceptual limit or boundary, which divides what is represented from what is not represented with respect to the origin” (Branigan 1984, 57). It is important to note that frame refers to how and where the representation takes place, whereas object refers to what is being represented. In the example above, the blurry effect on the elephants as well as the location inside the bar would both be considered aspects of frame.

The last mode of representation in Branigan’s list is **mind**. This term is defined as the condition of consciousness, principle of coherence, and logic of appearance for the representation presented to viewers (Branigan 1984, 57). According to Branigan, mind answers the question of why viewers are receiving the subjective point of view from the character. It is essentially the rationale or motivation of the filmmaker to provide a particular point of view—whether subjective, objective, or unknown. For example, a view is shown of a tiny character among a crowd of giants; the view then transitions to reality where the character stands among others of similar height. The element of mind in this instance is exaggeration, because it is the cause for receiving the subjective point of view of the character. It is important to note however that not all films explain why or how a character’s mindset is revealed to the audience. In this instance, the element of mind is considered unknown or non-existent.
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Contextual Review: Primary Research

A critical aspect of my research involves a review of classical 2D, live-action, and 3D story and filmmaking techniques. It is through this research that I decipher past and current trends of subjective portrayal in a select number of mainstream films and discover areas that have already been explored, un-explored, and are in need of improvement. Among my first observations of mainstream film and animation, were common trends where areas of subjectivity occur. I also observed similarities and differences in the techniques used to accomplish subjective portrayal. During this initial observation, I documented these sources of subjective portrayals by categorizing them into storytelling strategies and filmmaking techniques (Table 3). Within this chart I began to identify potential areas of illustrating character mental process that might be worth exploring in my own films. Some of the vocabulary was pre-existing, while I invented other terms to describe particular ideas and techniques.
1st Initial Observations: Common Trends in Subjective Portrayals (in no specific order)

STORYTELLING STRATEGIES:

A. Point of View: (perspective from which a story is told)
   1. First person - one character tells the story; the reader only knows/sees what
      the character knows/sees
   2. Third person limited - narrator tells the story but plays no part in the action;
      narrator can only see inside one characters’ head
   3. Third person omniscient - narrator can tell everything there is to know about
      the characters and problems
   4. POV switch - switching between multiple characters within the film—
      whether it be two different characters, or the same character at different ages

B. Unknown Reality: a method of storytelling where reality and fantasy are blended (it
   becomes unclear to viewers whether they are observing something ‘real’ or ‘fake’)

C. Metaphor: the story uses symbolism to compare the character to another person,
   place or object

D. Real vs. Imagined: a method of storytelling where both versions of what is real and
   what is imagined by the character is revealed to viewers (it is clear which is real and
   which is fantasy)

FILMMAKING TECHNIQUES THAT ILLUSTRATE SUBJECTIVE
CHARACTER THOUGHT:

A. Transitions:
   1. Crosscutting/Parallel editing- editing that alternates shots of two or more
      lines of action occurring in different places, usually simultaneously
   2. Graphic match - two successive shots joined so as to create a strong
      similarity of compositional elements
   3. Match on Action - a cut that splices two different views of the same action
      together at the same moment in the movement, making it seem to continue
      uninterrupted

B. Camera Shots:
   4. Eyeline match - shot shows a character looking off in one direction and the
      following shot shows a nearby space/object that the character sees
   5. POV shot - a subjective view that shows what the character is looking at
   6. High angle (looking down on a character) - represents danger and makes
      character inferior
   7. Low angle (looking up at a character) - provides a triumphant feeling and
      makes the character superior
C. **Compositing:** combining visual elements from separate sources into single images
   1. **Superimposition:** one or more images composited over the other
   2. **Montage:** juxtaposition or partial superimposition of several shots to form a single image.

D. **X-Ray:** seeing inside the character’s body to understand feelings/thoughts
   Example: Seeing a hamster running in someone’s head to indicate thought process, or a seeing a heart beat inside someone’s chest to indicate nervousness.

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Table 3. Initial observation list of subjective portrayals in film

These terms are derived from classical cinematic conventions, but can be applied to non-traditional filmmaking practices that illustrate a character’s mental process. Subjectivity may occur in the story from various points of view, as long as the character remains the focus of attention. The story may be told from either a first person perspective or from third person perspective in which the narrator tells the story about the character. In some situations, a point of view switch among multiple characters might be employed to present differing perspectives, behaviors, and feelings. This approach provides viewers with the understanding of the subjective point of view of a particular character. I found that a point of view switch most frequently occurs in live-action film, while animations align the viewer with one or two characters and remain with those characters throughout the film. Moreover, live-action seems to be more prone to showing multiple characters with separate lives, in different locations, doing separate activities. Perhaps this is due to the amount of work needed to create more characters and settings in animation as opposed to being able to film existing actors, objects and environments in live-action.

**Metaphor** may be used within the story as a method to more symbolically represent a character’s emotions, behaviors and attitudes. On occasions where metaphor is used to
manipulate the character, this technique is most often illustrated within animation because of its transformative capabilities. Used most often in dream sequences, unknown reality occurs within all mediums to create a confusion of time and space.

A variety of techniques are used across all mediums to illustrate character mental process. For example, a graphic match may be used to transition between aspects of objective and subjective views. Particular camera shots are also often used to subjectively show a character’s line of sight or mentality, like the POV shot or low-angle camera. These camera techniques are well established and commonly used in live-action as well as 2D and 3D animation. Compositing, a technique in which separate visual elements are combined into a single image, most often occurs within live-action film, and shows what a character is seeing, thinking, and feeling. X-Ray is a term I developed to label scenes in which viewers can literally see into the character’s brain, stomach, heart, eyes by the way in which the elements of the frame are rendered and layered. This technique is most often used in the animation medium. In examining the list, I concluded that by combining a number of these classical techniques from live-action and animation, an animator has greater potential to enhance both perceptual and mental subjectivity by placing viewers within a character’s mindset.

The real vs. imagined area of storytelling was most interesting to me and I felt that it was a good area to begin exploring character perspective. I began by creating sketches that explored this category within subjective portrayal. Within the process of creating these visualizations, I found particular methods of communicating an objective vs. subjective experience. The first set of images represents mental subjectivity of a child’s imagination and exaggeration (Figure 3.1). The image on the left illustrates a child’s imagination while
using a rolling pin to flatten cookie dough. Imagination represents a controllable, intentional thought of a child at play. The image on the right explores a child's exaggerated perspective at seeing his arm in a cast. This view represents an unintentional exaggeration of a child's trapped physical and mental state while unable to move his limb.

![Figure 3.1. Real vs. imagined scenarios of a child's imagination and exaggerated view](image)

The sketches in Figure 3.2 represent perceptual subjectivity through the eyes of an insect. The image on the left is a literal interpretation of the way in which a butterfly sees with its compound eyes. The image on the right combines both perceptual and mental subjectivity in one frame by not only exploring an altered perspective from the child’s imagination as a fly, but also by becoming a literal translation of the insect’s POV (Figure 3.2). Thus, in the process of visualizing objective vs. subjective points of view, I found there are various techniques to portraying a character’s mental process.
After organizing the initial list of observations, creating a few sketches to visualize real verses imagined scenarios, and reviewing more films, I again categorized areas within film where subjective portrayals occur. Certain areas within the first chart are omitted, while other techniques are added. The chart was expanded to include techniques in the categories of story, environment, character, and editing (Table 4). Using this chart of techniques, I began working on applied study films for the Thurber Project with the goal of incorporating these methods into the films to enhance subjective portrayal.
Definitions
1. Psychorealism: physical visualization of character psyche
2. Non-diegetic: elements that are outside the space of the narrative, such as music, narrator's commentary or a graphic element composited on top
3. Graphic Match: 2 successive shots joined (color or shape) so as to create a strong similarity of compositional elements
4. Match on Action: A cut which splices two different views of action together at the same moment in the movement, making it seem to continue uninterrupted
5. Montage: A term meaning assembling. May be the combining of images in one frame by superimposition. Or, it may describe a quick succession of camera shots.
6. Crosscutting: Editing that alternates shots of 2 or more lines of action occurring in different places, usually simultaneously – so that the 2 actions are linked together in some way.
7. Elliptical Editing: Shot transitions that omit parts of an event, causing an ellipses in plot or story duration.

Table 4. 2nd initial observation list: common trends in subjective portrayals

3.2 Applied Study Films: Thurber Project

The first series of applied study films is a collaboration of three animations based on original illustrations by James Thurber, and musical compositions by Peter Schickele. Within these animations, character and style were already developed—as the subjects are based on existing Thurber drawings. Moreover, manipulation of character was prohibited in order to maintain the integrity of the specific characteristics and qualities of the ‘Thurber dog.’ Given these restrictions, I was able to focus attention on applying techniques in the areas of story development, transitions, camera placement, timing, layout and movement. Thus, within the 2nd list of observed subjective portrayal conventions (Table 4) techniques were used within areas of story, environment and editing. Story development within the three Thurber films revolved around topics of alcohol induced hallucinations in He Goes with His Owner into Bars, a manipulation of environment as a unique way to see via a dog’s sense of smell in Hunting Hounds, and an incorporation of intermixed reality and memories through a dream sequence in Dog Asleep (Figure 3.3).
3.2.1 Thurber Film 1: Dog Asleep – Film Research

In referencing the Thurber illustration titled *Dog Asleep*, it seemed fitting to develop a story based on a dog’s dream. To begin story concepting, I looked at previous examples of subjective dream sequences. The two films I observed were *Felix Dines and Pines*, a 1927 film directed by Pat Sullivan and Otto Messmer, and *The Science of Sleep*, a 2006 film directed by Michel Gondry. In the dream sequences of these two films, I noticed various similarities in techniques used to portray a character’s mindset while dreaming. In Table 4, these areas fall within the categories of a manipulation of character and environment through skewed perspective and scale, and they utilize editing techniques of graphic match and match on action. Moreover, both films use a trigger device of falling asleep to cue a point of view change, which falls under the term ‘vision’ within Branigan’s elements of classical representation.

In the 1927 *Felix Dines and Pines*, Felix overstuffs himself and is taken on a wild, hallucinatory nightmare induced by fever and pain. After dozing off, polka dots cover the screen and fade in and out as an indication of internal sickness overcoming Felix. The act of
Felix falling asleep is the trigger moment where the objective changes to subjective point of view, and the dots followed by warp circles are a portal device to carry viewers into the dream world (Figure 3.4). Within this new ‘subjective’ world, the environment immediately becomes skewed in proportion and scale, and characters morph from one into the other.

Figure 3.4. Felix enters into the dream world

_The Science of Sleep_, a live-action film, follows a character Stephané whose vivid dreams and imagination are often intermixed with his reality. After Stephané falls asleep, his subconscious mind is represented as a cooking television show where he is the host and may literally cook up dreams. This TV show setting acts as the portal that carries viewers from the conscious to subconscious mind to indicate thoughts occurring while he sleeps, but not yet dreams. The television screen on the wall represents his dream status. When the screen shows Stephané in the current cook show setting, viewers are aware that he is asleep, but not yet dreaming. As he begins to literally cook up thoughts and memories, patterns of static appear on the television screen, indicating that Stephané is beginning to dream (Figure 3.5). The static fills the frame and becomes a portal into the dream world.
In illustrating character mindset within a dream sequence, another common technique in the two observed films is the incorporation of elements from the character’s reality in order to represent subconscious thought and memory entering the dream world. For example, in *Felix Dines and Pines*, elements from Felix’s reality enter the dream in abnormal proportion and begin to chase him. These elements of reality are objects that Felix eats and interacts with just before he falls asleep. In Felix’s real world, he eats a boot; in his dream world, the boot becomes a giant monster trying to devour him (Figure 3.6). This sequence portrays his memorable fear and struggle to receive a decent meal, where the prey becomes the hunter instead. Within my own chart of initial observations, I considered these scenarios to be aspects of the environment, where objects, props, and settings are manipulated to illustrate character mindset.
In *The Science of Sleep*, elements that enter Stephané’s dreams derive from his subconscious thoughts and memories of recent events. For example, after his boss insults his shaving abilities, Stephané is later cut by a razor. In his dream, the same razor reappears and turns into a spider that attacks his boss. Also, in one dream sequence, Stephané is shown in the workplace completing his normal tasks when his hands become absurdly large, making it difficult to layout type (Figure 3.7). Within my 2\textsuperscript{nd} chart of initial observations, this technique falls in the area of a manipulation of character. Considered to be a manipulation of the environment, settings, backgrounds and props often appear out of place, are skewed in proportion and scale, and sometimes shape-shift.
In addition to manipulating character and environment, both films utilize specific editing techniques to switch from subjective back to objective worlds. In both *Felix Dines and Pines* and *The Science of Sleep*, the dream sequence ends when the character awakens. In *Felix Dines and Pines*, Felix is shown squirming about in attempts to dodge a chef’s large fork. Graphic match and match on action is used to transition to the next scene where Felix is squirming in reality, which causes him to awaken (Figure 3.8). Thus, viewers are transported efficiently back to the real world. Moreover, in *The Science of Sleep*, Stephané dreams that he is skiing. As his skis start to sink into the cold snow, he is awakened to find that his feet are in a small refrigerator (Figure 3.9). In this instance, a match on action is used to transport viewers from the character's subjective thoughts, to the objective real world. It is also important to note that the only method of exiting the dream world in these two films is through the portal of awakening.
3.2.2 Thurber Film 1: *Dog Asleep*

In *Dog Asleep*, I wanted the main content to be within the dog’s dream. To convey this rationale to viewers, the film begins by using a trigger device—a technique used in both reference films—transporting viewers from the dog’s reality into his dream world. In this instance, the trigger is a dog yawning, which represents sleepiness. The camera then zooms into the dog’s mouth where a sleeping dog appears. The opened dog’s mouth is a portal into
the subjective mindset of the dog, and the abnormal placement of the sleeping dog is an immediate indication that viewers have now moved into an unreal world (Figure 3.10).

Figure 3.10. Transition from the reality of a dog yawning into his dream world

Also in reference to the previously observed films, a common technique used to indicate subjective mindset within a character's dream is through a manipulation of environment by means of abnormal scale, proportion, placement, and morphing. These objects may be random, or in the case of Felix Dines and Pines and The Science of Sleep, elements from the character's reality enter into the dream through an altered perspective. Within the first applied study Thurber film, Dog Asleep, I incorporated elements and events from Thurber animations that were shown before this piece was performed. For example, in the first film of the series of six, a mother dog is feeding her pups pancakes. To include this memory of being fed pancakes, in the Dog Asleep story a cloud morphs into a giant pancake with falls on the ground. The pancake then morphs into a hole, which the dog jumps into before transitioning into the next scene (Figure 3.11). This change from one object into the next is accomplished through editing techniques of graphic match and match on action. Also, in the Dog and Butterfly film a dog sees a butterfly and ends up flying with him. In the
Dog Asleep story, a butterfly appears in the dog’s dream, and he flies alongside the insect (Figure 3.12).

Figure 3.11. A pancake transforms into a hole that the dog jumps into

Figure 3.12. Memories from previous events appear in the dog’s dream (Left) Scene from Dog and Butterfly (Right) Storyboard scene from Dog Asleep

Like Felix Dines and Pines and The Science of Sleep, the dream sequence ends by revealing the reality of the situation. However, in this film, the dog does not awaken. Instead, viewers are removed from his world of slumber and see an objective view of the dog dreaming. Graphic match is used to transition between the dog’s belief of running through clouds to the reality of him sleeping upside down and kicking his legs (Figure 3.13). Without
attempting to deviate from techniques of previously observed films, the final *Dog Asleep* film is mainly a recreation of pre-existing conventions for subjective portrayal within dream sequences. It acts as a demonstration of commonly used techniques within dream sequences that I first documented in a chart of initial observations of subjective portrayals in film. From this study, I concluded that in the absence of symbolic or metaphorical imagery, viewers only observe *what* a character sees or believes, rather than *how* the character sees, thinks, and feels. In relation to identification with the character, viewers recognize the character and are aligned with him, but they do not feel allegiance towards him— as the story never moves beyond a superficial level of meaning.

![Figure 3.13. Graphic match/match on action transitions viewers from dream to reality](image)

3.2.3 Thurber Film 2: *Hunting Hounds* – Film Research

Using the Thurber illustration titled *Hunting Hounds*, I created a story based on dogs hunting a rabbit. In conducting initial research on dogs I came across an article “Understanding Your Dog’s Sense of Smell,” written by Stanley Coren and Sarah Hodgson. This article states that a dog relies on her sense of smell to interpret the world, in much the
same way as people depend on their sight. In using character-subjective mindset as the
direction for developing a story, I decided to use smell as the method for portraying a dog’s
subjective view of objects. To begin concepting, I reviewed previous examples of techniques
that visually interpreted smell.

A common technique to illustrate the invisible smell is to represent scent as a visual
form of gas. This is shown in wavy lines, or as a combination of a transparent, organic form
that undulates and weaves through the air. Two examples I referenced in visualizing smell
were in the 1959 Pepé Le Pew cartoon *Really Scent* directed by Chuck Jones, and a 2003 video
game *A Dog’s Life*, published by Sony Computer Entertainment Europe for the Sony
Playstation 2. In Pepé Le Pew cartoons, smell is shown as a slightly transparent gas that
undulates through the air originating from Pepé’s skunk tail. This simple visual
representation of smell does not indicate character mindset. However, in some instances the
smell morphs into other objects providing a visual metaphor for how the other characters
within the film mentally react to the smell. For example, in *Really Scent* the gas morphs into
monstrous figures that appear to devour intruders (Figure 3.14). These creatures provide
viewers with a subjective portrayal of how other characters in the film view the smell and
Pepé – a disgusting pest that harms others by his horrible scent.
In the video game *A Dog’s Life* smell is also represented as a visual transparent gas. Again, simply showing this organic form does not necessarily indicate subjective mindset. However, in this instance, viewers may only see this gas while in the dog’s point of view. The game entitles this view Smell-O-Vision that enables an outsider (human) to see through the dog’s eyes, which is highly dependent on his ability to smell. In Smell-O-Vision view, the dog’s nose is visible as the camera is meant to take the literal place of a dog’s eyes (Figure 3.15). There are also a few challenge games where the dog’s world through sense of smell and the human reality are intermixed. In this instance, smell is visually shown in a gaseous state, but the entire dog is shown in third person point of view (Figure 3.15). This challenge game scene creates a space where both objective and subjective points of view are shown simultaneously.
3.2.4 Thurber Film 2: Hunting Hounds

After reviewing previous examples on illustrating smell, I wanted to push beyond the boundaries of conventional methods to create something more original. This second applied study film Hunting Hounds begins by placing viewers in first person point of view with the dog. To deviate from the previous wavy, gaseous form of smell, I chose a connect-the-dot theme as a metaphor for smell. As the dog begins to smell, traces of the object appear until eventually the dots are connected and the object is revealed after the dog has identified it (Figure 3.16). This technique places viewers in the subjective sight of a dog’s sense of smell.
Moreover, if the object is not literally there, it will remain in dot form, as it is only representative of a smell trace or map rather than the actual object. For example, as the dog first smells the rabbit, wavy lines of dots form into the rabbit shape indicating the direction of the smell, but the dots are never connected because the rabbit is no longer in the area (Figure 3.17).

Referencing *A Dog's Life* challenge levels, I use both first person and third person point of view to show a dog’s subjective mindset. In some instances the dog is seen from a third person point of view smelling his environment, which is shown in a ‘connect the dots’
manner (Figure 3.18). I also provide a first person point of view by keeping the dog’s nose visible in the foreground.

To switch between views of subjective POV and a pure objective view, I borrow from previous editing techniques of the observed dream sequence films and use *match on action* transitions. In the figure below, the perception shot shows the dog chasing the rabbit. A match on action transition changes the scene into an objective view where multiple dogs are chasing a rabbit (Figure 3.19). Within this film, subjectivity takes place within the present tense as the dogs hunt for a rabbit. Through this applied study, I found that in using the metaphorical theme of ‘connect the dots’ to visualize smell, I was able to expand upon a conventional method in order to better visualize how a dog sees through scent as opposed to simply showing that the dog was smelling something. By using point of view shots and focusing the story on one dog character (and secondary dogs) I was able to promote viewer recognition as well as alignment via viewer identification. Also, by choosing a more symbolic approach to a dog’s sense of smell I intended to create suspense by not allowing viewers to
see the entire object until the dog recognized the smell. We perhaps root for the dog to trace
the scent and catch the rabbit. This aspect of ‘rooting for a character’ falls under the
category of allegiance in Smith’s writings on identification with characters. However, because
the story does not use symbolism to represent emotion or attitude, full allegiance is not likely
achieved with the character.

Figure 3.19. Match on action transition to switch from a POV shot to objective view of dog
chasing a rabbit

3.2.5 Thurber Film 2: *He Goes With His Owner Into Bars* – Film Research

In referencing the Thurber illustration titled *He Goes With His Owner into Bars*, I
created a story based on the concept of a dog drinking alcohol and becoming drunk. I
wanted to create scenarios that would illustrate both the subjective effects of alcohol on the
dog’s mind and body as well as the objective view of his surrounding environment.
Therefore, it was important to review techniques of alternating subjective and objective
points of view as well as illustrating the subjective mindset of a character while drunk. The
first examples I observed were in the 1924 film *The Last Laugh* directed by F.W. Murnau, the 1928 film *Felix Woos Whoopee* directed by Pat Sullivan and Otto Messmer.

In *The Last Laugh*, the main character played by Emil Jannings becomes intoxicated and falls into a hallucinatory dream. When he awakens, the scene is manipulated through optical effects. For example, the entire scene is distorted in a circular shape and the environment is displayed out of focus as if seen through the bottom of a glass bottle, thus providing a subjective view of the character’s current eyesight influenced by alcohol (Figure 3.20). Characters are also manipulated by means of distorted perspective and a use of montage. For example, when other characters taunt and laugh at Jannings for losing his doorman job, a woman’s face is shown squashing and stretching in a haunting manner (Figure 3.21). Additionally, laughing faces are placed on top of one another in a montage to represent Emil’s growing overwhelmed and intimidated feelings around other people (Figure 3.21).

Figure 3.20. Perceptual Subjectivity: fisheye lens and motion blur in *The Last Laugh*²³
Similar techniques in manipulating character and environment are used in Felix Woos Whoopee. In this film, Felix gets drunk and hallucinates. During his inebriated journey home, the ground beneath him moves in a wave-like motion and buildings sway back and forth to convey a dizzy feeling (Figure 3.22). This technique is reminiscent of the skewed buildings during Emil’s drunken point of view. In addition to a skewing of the environment, other objects and characters are also manipulated; some non-living beings come alive, while other characters randomly appear. For example, a light post is transformed into a human-like character while a car is transformed into animals and monsters (Figure 3.23). Unlike the live-action film The Last Laugh, the animated Felix film pushes the boundaries of skewed character perspective to a new level by completely transforming objects and animals into other beings in order to represent Felix’s mental removal from reality.
Felix Woos Whoopee also utilizes an alternating continuity of subjectivity as the film ends with Felix choking a chicken outside of the house from which the scene eventually transitions to inside his bedroom. Before the scene completely transitions from imagined to real, there is an in-between phase that illustrates Felix choking the chicken while standing on his bed; the chicken eventually morphs into a pillowcase (Figure 3.24). This technique of creating an intermixed reality can be viewed also as a portal device from objective to subjective views. It is through intermixing and alternating perspectives that the audience may
receive a full understanding of the events taking place. These techniques of a manipulation of character, environment, and the use of matches in editing transitions are listed in the 2nd chart of initial observations of common trends for subjective portrayals in film. Both films utilize similar techniques to differentiate the objective from the subjective world.

Figure 3.24. Felix strangles a chicken in his dream and a pillowcase in reality

3.2.6 Thurber Film 2: He Goes With His Owner Into Bars

The content of this film revolves around the concept of a dog becoming intoxicated and hallucinating. Borrowing from previous film techniques to illustrate the real verses imagined world, this film alternates between subjective and objective viewpoints. I wanted viewers to experience the film through the dog’s state of mind as he becomes drunk and sobers up—from start to completion. To open and close the film, an objective view of the bar, dog, and master provides a full understanding of where the characters begin and where they eventually end up (Figure 3.25).
After reviewing conventions of portraying drunkenness by manipulating the environment through optical effects, skewed perspective, and morphing objects, I wanted to further push the boundaries of these pre-existing techniques to create something original. With the satisfactory results of plugging symbolic imagery into an existing subjective portrayal technique, as in the connect-the-dot theme to represent smell in *Hunting Hounds*, I wanted to incorporate a similar technique into this film. Using metaphorical imagery, I abstractly represent the dog’s thoughts and emotions. The area that seemed most fitting to incorporate these indirect representations was within the dog’s drunken hallucinations, where realism is rejected completely. Depending upon the level of intoxication, hallucinations move further from and closer to reality.

Within the film, the ocean is used as a symbolic representation of beer. The more the dog drinks, the more he interacts with the ocean in his hallucinations. To transition from objective to subjective views, the camera zooms into the beer bowl. The liquid acts as a portal into the dog's hallucinated world, where the next scene begins (Figure 3.26). In the first removal from reality, the dog is shown running along the shore chasing after what he
believes to be seagulls (Figure 3.26). In this scenario, he is completely removed from reality but is not yet interacting with the ocean, because he is still on the verge of being completely drunk. The ground plane undulates like waves while the trees bend back and forth like rubber. This unsteady environment represents the character's dizzy and unsteady feelings resulting from the alcohol. Moreover, similar to Felix Woos Whoopee in which the scene transitions between choking a chicken to choking a pillow, the next scenes in this film involve a representation of an intermixed reality between standing on a dock to being in the bar. As the first effects of alcohol begin to wear off, poles become the legs of bar inhabitants, a seagull becomes the coattail of his master, a life saver becomes the dog bowl underneath the beer tap, and both worlds are intermixed before completely transitioning back into reality (Figure 3.27).

Figure 3.26. Beer in dog bowl transitions into the sea in the dog's hallucinated world
After the dog refills his belly with beer, the following hallucinations move even further from reality. A graphic match is used to transition the liquid in the beer bowl into a wavy ocean where the dog becomes trapped on a buoy that resembles a bar stool. The dog hopping from buoy to buoy on the ocean gives the hint that he is jumping from bar stool to bar stool in reality (Figure 3.28). Because there is an indication of hallucinated or exaggerated reality in the dock-to-bar transformations, I expected viewers to imagine the reality of the buoy situation by recognizing its similar graphic look to the bar stools. After becoming more intoxicated, he interacts with the ocean through a more rocky relationship, first being tossed back and forth and then being completely submerged underwater within his hallucination. He hiccups bubbles containing both real and imagined objects (Figure 3.28). This represents an intermixing of real and imagined elements. Last, he is swept up in a bubble and tossed around like a billiard ball on a pool table (Figure 3.29). This represents his lack of control over his own physical body and mind. The hallucination ends by using a match on action to dissolve back into the reality of the situation as the dog spins around on a pool table, bumping the balls in his path.
To further enhance the story, the conventional method of using the frame as a source for subjectivity is also utilized through optical effects and camera movement that portray dizziness and disorientation. For example, a point of view shot is utilized in the last scene where the dog has finally sobered up and sees reality. As he spins around the pool table, viewers are first given an objective view and then a POV shot of an encircling table (Figure 3.30). An iris appears around the scene to indicate the dog is closing his eyes and passing out. When he awakens, another POV shot is utilized and a new location is shown (Figure 3.30). Like the dog, viewers may be confused and unsure of their new location. This
view is shown just before switching back to an objective view of master and dog kicked out of the bar.

Figure 3.30. POV shots of dog on pool table and then waking up outside the bar

With this applied study film, I discovered ways to combine and re-adapt conventions of subjective portrayal by using the character’s hallucinations and mental associations as a source for symbolic representation of his state of mind. The ocean is a symbol for alcohol, and interaction between the dog and ocean represents his level of intoxication—both physical and mental. Designing images to serve a dual purpose of both what a character sees and what it represents to the character both physically and mentally helped to move visuals beyond superficiality of subjective portrayal toward representations of deeper meanings within the narrative and visuals. When emotions, thoughts and attitudes are represented, viewers should move beyond the recognition and alignment aspects of identification into feeling an allegiance with the character. As the filmmaker, I provide a context behind the character’s actions through an intermix of elements from reality and hallucinations as well as graphic matches and match on action transitions to move the audience from objective to subjective views. I present visual opportunities for the viewers to engage emotionally with
the character and situations. According to the empirical studies reviewed by Coplan in *Empathic Engagement with Narrative Fictions*, this subjective access contributes to a more memorable and enjoyable experience for the viewer (Coplan 2004).

3.3 Elements of Classical Representation that Reveal Subjectivity in Film

To continue my study on creating a mental process narrative film, I developed a final list of areas for subjectivity in animated film. This list is the product of my observations of live-action, 2D and 3D animation as well as a review of Edward Branigan’s terms of classical representation, and conclusions drawn within the Thurber applied studies. Using Branigan’s six terms as a basis for identifying areas of classical representation in live-action film, I name six areas, point of view, continuity of subjectivity, tense, subjective object, subjective source, and rationale, where subjectivity may be revealed in animation to create a mental process narrative film.

The first term, point of view, refers to the position or vantage-point from which the events of a story are observed and presented to viewers. In a mental process narrative, there are three main points of view in which the story may be told: first person, second person, and omniscient point of view. In first person point of view, the story is revealed through the character, and in a mental process narrative film, subjective thought must be expressed. This perspective is applied through POV shots that illustrate mental or perceptual subjectivity. In third person point of view, the story of the main character is revealed through a secondary character. In a mental process narrative film the narrator must reveal knowledge about a character’s inner thoughts and emotions to the audience. Omniscient point of view reveals
subjective events through an unknown source. Within the Thurber applied study films, the point of view occurs in both first and third person.

The second term defining subjective portrayal in animation is **continuity of subjectivity**. While Branigan suggests that there is always an activating instance that causes viewers to see a particular point of view, I have found that trigger devices are not always used to transition from an objective to subjective view. Moreover, the story is not always told from multiple points of view; thus there is not always a need for a ‘trigger device’. For this reason, the term continuity of subjectivity allows for discussion of if, how, and when there is an exchange in view points throughout the film. I have identified three classifications of continuity: **alternating**, **simultaneous**, and **continuous**.

**Alternating** continuity means that subjective and objective points of view switch from one to the other. In this category, trigger devices may be used to signify an exchange of representation from an objective to subjective view. There are several types of editing that may be used to accomplish this exchange of views: graphic match, match on action, crosscutting, zoom in/zoom out, and using an iris to imitate the character’s eye-view. The second level in the continuity of subjectivity is **simultaneous**, where both subjective and objective points of view are shown at the same time. This could be accomplished by incorporating multiple views on one screen through a frame within a frame device, or by using dual projections alongside one another. The last level of continuity is **continuous**, where the subjective point of view is maintained throughout the entire film. In this case, there is no ‘activating instance’ for an exchange in point of view or origin. Within the Thurber applied study, all films demonstrate an alternating continuity of subjectivity, because I wanted to provide viewers with a full understanding of events in reality and the character’s mindset.
The third term I apply to defining areas of subjective portrayal in the animation medium is **tense**. In deconstructing the elements of narrative film that illustrate the subjective mindset of a character, the continuity in which subjective and objective points of view are revealed and the time period at which this representation appears are two separate occurrences. While continuity involves the exchange of objective and subjective views, tense involves the term or period that the character’s subjective thoughts take place. This involves past, present, future, and/or undefined tense. In the Thurber film *Dog Asleep*, because the story takes place within a dog’s dream, undefined tense is used. There aren’t any references as to exactly when the dog fell asleep and when viewers enter his dream. Also, there is no indication of the duration of time that the dream lasts. This ambiguity facilitates a connection with viewers as they too do not remember the exact tense when falling asleep or how long dreams last.

In *Hunting Hounds*, both present and undefined tenses are used. In the beginning of the film, it seems that all events are occurring within present tense. The subjective views of connecting dots are shown in present tense as the dog recognizes objects by smell. However, in the middle of the film, beginning with the master running with a pack of dogs and the following scenes inside the grass, the time period between events becomes unclear. These sequences exist within an undefined tense because scent does not clearly show when the object or person was at a certain location. When the rabbit reappears towards the last half of the film, it is clear that scenes where the dog is chasing the rabbit exist in present tense, because the action shown is continuous. Within *He Goes with His Owner into Bars*, the film begins and ends in present tense but has moments of undefined tense in the middle. Events clearly occurring in present tense are when the dog is sober—when he enters the bar, refills
his stomach, and wakes up at the end. Sequences in undefined tense exist when he is drunk, since exact time and length of events are not always known.

Within Branigan’s list of elements in classical representation, he uses the term object to simply refer to that which is represented in the frame. Within my list of areas that portray subjectivity in animation, I clarify that **subjective object** refers to a thought, emotion, association or attitude of the character. There is an endless amount of possibilities for a subjective object, as every film possesses a unique story, characters, and events. In the Thurber project, the objects of subjectivity in *Dog Asleep* are elements within the dog’s dream, because events that take place are all thoughts in his subconscious mind. Within *Hunting Hounds*, the subjective objects are dots representing his sense of smell. And, within *Bars*, the subjective objects are the dog’s exaggerations while intoxicated.

The fifth area of subjective portrayal in animation is **subjective source**. This term refers to the place that subjectivity is shown. Through observation and experimentation, I have found four main sources for illustrating character mindset: character, environment, display, and sound. First, subjective representation may be demonstrated via a direct manipulation of the character’s own body. Particular techniques to accomplish this manipulation of character within the frame may include: proportion changes, extra elements attached to body for added expression, a complete shape-shifting or morphing of the character, compositing elements over the character for expression, or a change in medium, style, or color. Within the Thurber project, I did not utilize the character as a source for subjectivity in order to preserve the integrity of the Thurber dog image.

The second source of subjectivity is the environment, where instead of a character alteration, there is a direct manipulation of the setting and props within the scene. The
subjective environment may be either metaphorical through a use of symbolism to explain a thought or feeling, or it may be a representation through the character's perspective that is deviant from reality. Particular techniques used to portray character psyche through manipulation of environment include skewed perspective and proportion of objects, and the use of metaphorical objects to represent character associations, feelings and thoughts. The environment may also be manipulated through shape-shifting or morphing of objects, abnormal placement of objects and settings, compositied elements laid over the environment for expression, or a change in medium, style or color change.

Within the Thurber project, the restrictions of manipulating the environment were that the style, medium, and black and white color had to remain consistent throughout the films (Figure 3.3). In *Dog Asleep*, all scenes were used to represent subjective environments because they only exist within the dog's mind. In one scenario the entire setting exists as a cloud, while in another scene the frame is flipped upside-down. This provides viewers with a unique situation that could only exist in the imagined world. In *Hunting Hounds*, I alter the environment according to the dog's sense of smell and whether he has recognized the object. If the scent is low, only dots appear; if the scent is high, dots are connected into objects. This dot environment provides the audience with a restricted view according to what the dog recognizes through smell. In *Bars*, the environment is consistently altered from reality according to the level of the dog's inebriation. Trees are shown in skewed perspective bending back and forth and objects are abnormally placed to represent a mix between reality and hallucination. This provides viewers with a metaphorical view of the dog's physical state as well as gave them access to subconscious thoughts entering his hallucinated world.
The third subjective source comes from the *display*. Display describes the subjective representation that comes directly from the visual presentation of the scene, relating specifically to character sight or perceptual subjectivity. In the case of display, the camera is considered to be a projection of the character. In Jean Mitry’s categories for subjective film, he describes camera movement that imitates motion or state of mind of the character as a way of ‘subjectivising the objective’ (Branigan 212). In the category of ‘display,’ I am not referring to the altering of objects in the environment, but instead using the camera’s framing, focus, and movement to portray the subjective perspective of the character. Optical effects such as blinking, blurred vision, and double vision may be used. An obstruction of view may also be used to represent a particular feature on the character that, when in a POV shot, prevents the viewer from seeing the entire scene. Within the Thurber applied study *Hunting Hounds*, there was an obstruction of view of the dog’s nose within the POV shots. In *Bars*, an iris effect was used to simulate blinking and the frame was sometimes blurred to represent the dog’s blurred eyesight. This provides viewers with a restricted view of the character’s world, thus linking spectator and character through physical perception of events.

The last source for subjective representation is *sound*, where subjective representation is an audio element within the film that helps to reveal character psyche. There are many techniques of using sound to illustrate subjective character mindset. A narrative soundtrack may be utilized so that viewers hear directly from the character or some other source about what the main character is thinking or feeling. Moreover, particular noises or words may be emphasized over others in order to demonstrate what a character is more attentive to within the frame. Metaphorical or symbolic music or sounds may also be used to represent specific thoughts, feelings, and emotions of the character. Within the Thurber project, the pre-
composed soundtracks are representative of the actions, mood or atmosphere, and emotions of the characters in the illustration. For the purpose of narrowing my research and experimentation, I will not be placing a high emphasis on discussing sound.

The last term I apply to define subjective portrayal in animation is rationale. This is the condition of consciousness being presented to viewers that provides explanation for why a particular subjective view is being shown. In most cases of films that illustrate character mindset, there is a rationale behind why this particular view is being shown. I identify nine types of rationale in animation: **flashback/memory, flash-forward, hallucination, imagination, exaggeration, dream, full character embodiment, psychorealism, and unknown.** Hallucinations are most often involuntary effects of drugs or alcohol, an illness, or pain. Dreams are also involuntary and uncontrolled. Both of these rationale points are most often characterized by seamless transitions, unknown durations of time as used in surrealism. To accomplish seamless transitions, elliptical editing and dissolves may be utilized to imply that a particular duration of time has passed (without directly stating the amount of passed time).

The imagination of a character may be a voluntary, purposeful manifestation to provide enjoyment, or it may be a more involuntary, less-controlled exaggeration out of fear, hope or misconception. Furthermore, in the case that the filmmaker wishes the audience member to be the character, this can be coined under the rationale of **full character embodiment.** Although there are many reasons and motivations behind filmmakers providing viewers with subjective access to the characters, at times rationale remains unclear. In past tense, we can assume that a flashback is occurring, while in the future, we may assume that it is a hope, dream, or fear of the character. In an unknown tense, we may assume the rationale to be a dream or hallucination. However, when showing a stream of consciousness, viewers are not
always sure why they are seeing events this way. Thus, rationale may be considered unknown in this situation. A full breakdown of this list and filmmaking techniques within each term is provided in Section 4.2 within the discussion of my final thesis film, *Holly Hype*.
CHAPTER 4 NEW STUDIES

4.1 Original Character and Story: Holly Hype

After the Thurber films were completed as initial applied studies in the use of subjective viewpoints in film, I produced an original narrative animation Holly Hype based on a single character within a story that further explores my interest in illustrating character mindset through animation. In developing the story, I built upon my understanding of the ‘essentials’ in a mental process narrative film that promotes an emotional and cognitive bond between spectator and character. Moreover, I made new discoveries on subjective-portrayal filmmaking techniques during the creation process. In the sections below, I discuss my initial film research and new story development to provide the reader with a better understanding behind narrative and design choices made. I also examine techniques and viewer identification achieved within Holly Hype.

4.1.1 Holly Hype – Film Research

After an initial review of a select number of existing mainstream films that illustrate character mindset as well as an examination of my own applied study films within the Thurber project, the method of illustrating real versus imagined events was an appealing way
to tell a story that illustrated a character's mental process. I saw great potential in using visual metaphors within imagined events to create unique visual comparisons or symbols of the character's thoughts, emotions and associations. Last, I enjoyed the aesthetic of differentiating real from imagined scenarios through a change in style or medium. With these three aspects in mind: real vs. imagined, use of metaphor, and change in style or medium, I examined both animation and live-action films and compiled a list of specific filmmaking techniques used within each area.

One of the first films that I reviewed for inspiration in the technique of switching between objective and subjective viewpoints was Tim Burton's 1982 short film *Vincent*. The narrative is about an average boy named Vincent Malloy who desires to be like his more gothic idol Vincent Price. Throughout the film, he uses his imagination to transform everyday, normal activities into more off-putting scenarios that his idol Vincent Price would undergo. In order to convey the idea of his imagined world, shots are connected through continuous character action when moving from reality to fantasy. Graphic match and match on action transitions are often used (Figure 4.1). Also, the character undergoes a wardrobe and hair change between his real and imagined personalities, representing a manipulation of character within the frame (Figure 4.2). In addition, Vincent’s subjective world is represented in dark colors with limited light, use of silhouettes, and at times in a skewed perspective, representing a manipulation of environment within the frame (Figure 4.3).
Figure 4.1. Vincent digging in a grave transitions to digging in his mother’s garden

Figure 4.2. Vincent Malloy imagines that he is Vincent Price

Figure 4.3. Vincent’s imagined environment is in silhouettes and skewed perspective
In thinking about the use of metaphor within film, I re-examined the animated shorts *Christopher Crumpet*, *Ryan*, and my applied study Thurber film *He Goes with His Owner into Bars*. The aspect that I found compelling about the depiction of character mindset within these films is that events are not just a translation of what the character imagines. Instead, metaphor is used to concretely represent the character’s otherwise intangible emotional and physical mindset. Christopher Crumpet transforms into a chicken, which provides a visual representation of the child’s emotional and physical behavior (Figure 2.12). In the film *Ryan*, character deformities and additions provide an abstract metaphor for emotions and thoughts (Figure 2.13). In the Thurber film, the dog’s interaction with the sea represents his level of intoxication and physical state of mind (Figure 3.26). In the development of a new story for a mental process narrative, I wanted to use visual metaphors to provide symbolic representations of the character’s mindset in order to understand the character’s point of view during events.

As reference for change in style when in subjective viewpoint, I reviewed *The Family Circus*<sup>27</sup> and *The Science of Sleep*<sup>18</sup>. In the UPA short animated film *Family Circus*, the environment and characters undergo a change in style within the father’s dream. At one point in the film, the father trips over a toy and hits his head on a wall with a drawing that his child made on it. In his dream, the picture comes to life and illustrates himself with his two children in a circus. Character style in the animation transforms into more childlike figures with limited movement, representing the switch from reality to a dream (Figure 4.4). Style changes also signify that the parent is now seeing events through the point of view of his child rather than his own. 2D animation was still used; however the style of figures as well as movement was altered. In the live-action film *The Science of Sleep*, objects and
environments within the main character’s dream undergo a change in medium from live-action film to stopmotion film, using handmade props (Figure 4.5). This complete removal from reality enables viewers to differentiate between reality and the dream world.

Figure 4.4. When the father trips over an elephant and gets knocked out, the environment transitions into a style of his daughter’s drawing.

Figure 4.5. The environments within Stephané’s dreams are composed of hand-made objects and use stopmotion film.
4.1.2 Holly Hype: Narrative Development – Trial and Error

4.1.2.1 Story Concept 1: 4 Leg’s are Better than Eight

The first original story concept for my principal thesis film *Holly Hype* began with a character that I had designed a few years ago (Figure 4.6). In developing her character, I created a story based on the idea of an alien girl living on planet earth who hated folding socks because her family had twice the amount of legs than the average human. I was most interested in showing a visual change from reality to the character’s imagination. I wanted the viewer to visually experience a new world from the character’s point of view. The plot is about the character’s attempts to invent a machine that makes sock laundering easier and faster (Figure 4.7). To alternate between objective to subjective worlds, the character’s imaginary sock laundry inventions come to life and go awry when she is interrupted by her mother, which eventually bring her back into reality (Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.6. Original Holly character design
After developing this story, I concluded that it didn’t clearly illustrate a character's mental process. This failed attempt enabled me to pinpoint key areas that are important in understanding the mindset of a character, as well as an emotional and cognitive involvement between character and spectator. First, within the story, there isn’t time for viewers to get a real sense of who the character is and how she is different than others. Because the viewers do not understand who the character is, there can be no emotional attachment to her; thus, viewers start out and remain disassociated from the character in the film. Throughout the story, the highest emphasis is on the chore of doing laundry as opposed to on the character herself. For the purpose of my thesis topic it is important to place high emphasis on the character rather than just a task needing to be completed within the plot.

Another important aspect discovered is the importance in showing not only what a character sees but how and why a character sees. In this *Four Legs are Better than Eight* story, I demonstrate what a character imagines, but viewers did not get a clear sense of her emotions while in her imagined thoughts. Emotions play an important role in thought process and how one interprets the world. Within Murray Smith’s model of identification or character
'engagement,' an audience’s relationship to the character within this story could best be described through recognition. Viewers recognized who the character is and what she is doing. Although there was a dominant spatial attachment to the single character, viewers received a limited amount of subjective access to the character’s desire to make an invention and to her irritated thoughts when she is interrupted. Additionally, other than the fact that she has multiple legs, viewers never understood the context of why she hates the experience of folding socks or chooses to solve the problem.

Because viewers did not understand her emotions, there could be no real allegiance with the character. Allegiance depends upon the spectator having access to the character's state of mind, understanding the context of the character’s actions, and having morally evaluated the character on the basis of this knowledge. In analyzing the current plot, I concluded which aspects of story needed to be further developed to create a mental process narrative film where true character psyche is revealed. First, character background needs to be established. Second, emphasis of the story should be placed on the character personality as opposed to a task. Third, there should be an understanding of character emotion or associations when in subjective point of view.

4.1.2.2 Story Concept 2: Hyperbole

In developing a new story, I chose to keep the main idea of using a character with asymmetrical eyes and four legs as well as the theme of a child struggling with having to complete a chore of picking up socks (Figure 4.8). To delve deeper into character psyche, I incorporated weeds and insects as a metaphor for Holly’s feelings toward the chore. The plot is about a character named Holly Hype who is to pick up dirty socks in her bedroom before
playing. Resulting from the vast amount of socks cluttering her room and a desire to play outside, the socks are exaggerated as weeds and pests polluting her room (Figure 4.9). Tension builds as Holly struggles to be rid of the clutter until finally she explodes with anger to relieve stress. After the release, weeds turn back into socks that she is able to pick up (Figure 4.9). In the end, her hopes are restored, as she is able to free herself from the clutches of sock clutter and re-enter the outside world where she is allowed to play (Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.8. Second Holly character design
The conflict in this new story is that Holly wants to go outside and play, but she is not able to do so until she has cleaned up the socks. As a technique to demonstrate her association with these socks, the big eye acts as literal film projector that sees things in exaggeration—the socks as weeds and pests (Figure 4.9). Moreover, her hair morphs and moves according to the associations being made (Figure 4.10). Upon completing this story, I still found that the plot was unclear. In the beginning I explored the setting with the camera, panning over photographs of Holly and her family as well as books and other items on her shelf in attempts to establish who the character is. Although I established recognition of the character, I still was not able to communicate what the character is thinking and feeling.
Using the metaphorical weeds and pests provided an added dimension to the character’s associations of objects. However, I was not able to fully establish why weeds in particular are used. Also, because I was working in the format of a short film, using multiple animation techniques of morphing hair, a projector within a big eye that exaggerates, as well as a morphing environment based on the metaphor of weeds were too much for the viewer to comprehend in a short amount of time. So, it was apparent that only one, maybe two techniques should be used per short film. I also felt that using a projector in the eye was a more literal translation of subjectivity than I desired. I wanted to utilize the capability of animation for something more expressive than an actual object like a projector. Moreover, in the story concept above, viewers did not understand why she is suddenly able to pick up the socks/weeds and thus could not completely align themselves with her point of view.

The conclusion from this story concept is that in creating a mental process narrative film within the format of a short animation, it is important to establish character personality and conflict early on, as well as to limit the techniques used to illustrate the subjective mindset of the character. It may also be important to establish reasoning behind why a particular association is being made in order to understand the character emotion within an
exaggeration. When there is a definite conflict within the film, it is also important to have a clear cause for a resolution to enable viewer engagement with character. Last, when working in the animation medium, one may illustrate subjectivity through expressive rather than direct translations of thought, as opposed to showing a literal idea for an invention or a literal projector showing an image.

4.1.2.3  Story Concept 3: *Threads of Grief*

In this story, I redesigned the character to have two normal sized eyes and two legs (Figure 4.11). The story is about Holly who has a twin sister that is recently deceased. The sisters used to knit socks as a hobby together, and the items remain scattered about the floor of the girls’ bedroom (Figure 4.12). Holly must pick up the socks before going outside to play. There is an internal struggle of grief within Holly to complete this chore alone and accept her sister’s death. Through grief, she gains an extra set of legs and one larger eye, because her sister had larger eyes. The socks become manifestations of the stages of grief—denial, anger, bargaining, and depression (Figure 4.13). Holly struggles to overcome this loss and eventually gains acceptance in the discovery of her sister’s missing doll, which she uses as a source of comfort to help her pick up the socks. In the end she is able to go outside and play, along with the company of her new (sister’s) doll friend (Figure 4.14).
Figure 4.11. 3rd Holly character design with normal eyes and legs

Figure 4.12. Storyboard clips about Holly and her twin sister from *Threads of Grief*

Figure 4.13. Storyboard clips showing stages of grief from *Threads of Grief*
After rewriting this story and presenting the idea to peers, it was apparent that while I had solved a few problems like establishing an internal rather than external conflict, use of metaphor for indirect, expressive interpretation, as well as creating a character background, the story had too many themes. It was unclear to peers whether the story was more about the dead sister, or about the conflict of wanting to play outside instead of picking up socks, or about the manifestations caused by Holly’s large creative eye. Viewers’ difficulty in understanding the main context for Holly’s struggle inhibited an allegiance with the character. Within Holly’s exaggerations, I incorporate socks morphing into flies, weeds, millipedes, and Holly falling into a giant hole. Although I associate these items with death and being outside, this metaphorical approach to illustrating the stages of grief didn’t align with the sister enough for the viewer to understand what Holly was going through. Moreover, there was nothing that explained Holly’s strange appearance of one very large eye.

The main conclusion of this trial and error process is that simplification within the plot, subjective portrayal techniques, and an emphasis on one character’s personality are key ingredients to developing a short mental process narrative film. In the three story concepts described above, either the story needed to be about Holly’s eye that causes exaggerated thoughts, a chore of picking up socks and her wanting to go outside and play, or about the loss of her sister and Holly failing to cope. Shortly after this early brainstorming process, I
watched a short film called *Handy* by Jean-Philippe Florin. The animation is about an unusual girl who had two very short, unusable arms (Figure 4.15). As a viewer, I sympathized with Handy while seeing her struggle to color a picture or retrieve a soda can from the refrigerator, and I was pulled into the story through this connection with her. For filmmakers and storytellers, sympathy seems to be an important factor in viewer involvement in the narrative. With the film *Handy* in mind, and in reflecting on the character in the above story concepts, I found the area for highest viewer identification and interest was during Holly’s struggle with exaggeration. I used knowledge gained in my study on subjective portrayal techniques in film as well as conclusions drawn from the above story concepts to develop my final narrative film titled *Holly Hype*.

![Figure 4.15. Scenes from the short film Handy](image)

4.1.3 *Holly Hype*: Final Plot Synopsis

In the final story *Holly Hype*, I use the character design similar to *Threads of Grief*, and give Holly one large eye and one small eye (Figure 4.16). When in calm situations that seem emotionally and physically stable, Holly’s outlook remains logical. However, when
circumstances become disquieting, Holly’s reality is projected through a creative, exaggerative eye. This unbalanced perception overpowers reason, and places Holly in situations where she is no longer in control. Holly’s large, asymmetrical right eye is used as a visual metaphor for her exaggerated and unbalanced perspective on life, where emotion rules and logic is blinded. Between her moments of exaggeration, she returns indoors to her bedroom—a place of comfort, predictability, and control. She knits as a therapeutic hobby to calm her eyes and mind (Figure 4.17). This enables her to, in a sense, ‘knit herself back together’ and maintain a level head through a relaxing activity. Eventually, after observing a significant difference in appearance between other children’s eyes and her own, she invents a solution through knitting to achieve a more balanced perspective. By covering up her large eye with a knitted mask that resembles a normal sized eye, Holly blocks out her extreme view of the world and gains a more physically and mentally balanced perception of events (Figure 4.18).

Figure 4.16. Final 3D Holly Hype model design
Holly Hype uses a simplified story about a character with a large, creative, uncontrollable eye that exaggerates reality. Focus remains on Holly as opposed to any other character. Her exaggerations are based on immediate situations happening within her reality. Viewers may see reality and then Holly’s amplified perspective. The conflict of Holly’s unusual perception is immediately established and knitting is shown as a hobby that helps to
alleviate or postpone this problem. Three main sequences are used to visually demonstrate Holly’s unique perception of events. First, Holly is shown caught in a tornado as an exaggeration of riding on a merry-go-round. Second, she associates being stuck in an unusual position in a jungle gym as being caught inside a threatening space of a spider web with large surrounding objects. Third, Holly associates a wobbly ride on a loose roller skate wheel as being on a tightrope in a circus. In the end, the mask enables her to place herself within these and other potentially threatening situations without exaggerating.

4.2 **Holly Hype: Elements and Techniques Utilized to Create a Mental Process Narrative Film**

Throughout this study, I implemented several elements within my list of areas for subjectivity in a mental process narrative film. In the sections below, I list each element, and discuss specific filmmaking techniques in each area in a table titled *Elements & Techniques of a Mental Process Narrative Film*. I use this table as a guide to analyze and discuss my film. The table also provides a framework for other filmmakers to reference when producing their own films that visualize character mindset. In the sections below, I provide a breakdown of possible filmmaking techniques within the areas for subjective portrayal, and then I discuss each element in relation to methods used in *Holly Hype*.

4.2.1 **Point of View & Continuity of Subjectivity**
Elements & Techniques of a Mental Process Narrative Film

**ELEMENT**

**I. Point of View:** This element refers to the position or vantage-point from which the events of a story are observed and presented.

**TECHNIQUES**

1) **First Person Point of View:** The point of view received by the viewer is only through the character. Thoughts expressed must be subjective. This perspective is applied through POV shots that illustrate mental or perceptual subjectivity.

2) **Third Person Point of View:** The story of the main character is revealed through a secondary character. "He", "she", "it", or "they" is used to reveal the plot. In a mental process narrative film the narrator must reveal knowledge about a character’s inner thoughts and emotions to the audience. With this point of view as origin, there isn’t a use of the POV shot, but character subjective point of view is still revealed.

3) **Omniscient Point of View:** The point of view of the character is revealed through an unknown source. With this point of view as origin, there isn’t a use of the POV shot or perception shot, but character subjective point of view is still revealed.

**ELEMENT**

**II. Continuity of Subjectivity:** The flow of events between objective and subjective points of view.

**TECHNIQUES**

1) **Alternating:** Subjective and objective points of view switch from one to the other. *Various types of editing may be used to transition between views.*
   a. Cut - quick switch from one scene to the next
   b. Dissolve - fading into the next scene
   c. Graphic match - Shapes, colors and/or movement of two shots match in composition
   d. Crosscutting - alternates shots of two or more lines of action occurring in different places, usually simultaneously – to link the two events together
   e. Zoom In/Out
   f. Iris In/Out

*Trigger devices’ may be used to signify that there will be an exchange of representation from an objective to subjective view.*

   g. Narrowing in on a character’s outer features or motion before switching views. Example: zooming into the character’s eyes
   h. Character is seen in x-ray mode (body part becomes transparent and a character’s insides are revealed)
Example: the view moves inside the character’s brain where viewers see events or props to indicate character thought; a character’s chest becomes transparent so that viewers may observe a fast beating heart or a heart growing bigger to indicate anger or love

i. Use of a non-diegetic graphic element composited over the scene
   Example: the scene transitions into wavy lines or several polka dots appear across the frame before moving into the subjective world

j. Change in timing or pacing of transitions

k. Change in timing or pacing of motion

l. Camera angle or lens change
   Example: in the objective view the camera is straight, in the subjective view the camera is tilted or in skewed perspective

2) **Simultaneous:** Subjective and objective points of view shown at the same time.
   a. Multiple views on one screen
      Example: the screen is divided into several views highlighting different aspects of the same event; the screen is divided into several views of different events occurring at different times or simultaneously
   b. Frame within a frame
      Example: a reflection of what the character sees appears within his eye; an objective view of the character is shown along with a thought bubble of his inner associations
   c. Dual projections alongside one another - different frames used to create a comparison between scenes

3) **Continuous:** Purely subjective point of view throughout the entire film

Table 5. Point of view & continuity techniques in a mental process narrative film

Within *Holly Hype*, no dialogue is used; however, point of view shots, perception shots, and objective shots are utilized throughout. First, third, and omniscient points of view all reveal information about Holly. No other characters exist in the film. Within the element of continuity of subjectivity in this mental process narrative film, there is an alternating technique between subjective and objective point of view. In observing films where subjective point of view is illustrated, situations are most clear when reality is also shown. This enables the audience to understand how a character’s perspective differs from other
characters in the film. Thus, in this film, viewers may receive various methods of seeing character point of view. I aim for viewers to respond from outside the drama, from their perspective as spectators, as well as to respond from inside, from the perspective of the character. In order to transition between objective and subjective points of view, trigger devices are used.

Throughout the film, to transition from an objective to subjective view, I developed a pattern of systematic alterations. First, after a sense of uneasiness overwhelms the Holly, as indicated by her facial expression, the pacing of camera cuts becomes quicker. Next, a close-up of Holly’s eyes is shown while the camera tracks over to the larger eye (Figure 4.19). As this camera shift occurs, the physical properties of the big eye alter according to her physical and emotional state while the color in the smaller eye dulls. After tracking to the larger eye, the camera lens changes to a fisheye view; and the angle is tilted (Figure 4.19). This signifies a change in perspective from objective to subjective. After these trigger devices of narrowing in on the character’s eye and camera angle and lens change, a point of view shot is shown. Similar to that of the eye sequence of events, the camera moves from left to right, and then tilts at a Dutch angle and the lens becomes wider. Next, a graphic match is used and the frame dissolves into the hallucinated scene where there is an alteration in style or medium (Figure 4.20). Essentially, the color, movement, style, and subject all reflect Holly’s exaggerated perception of reality.
Throughout the film, while in the exaggerated sequence various camera views are provided and cuts between each view grow quicker before transitioning back into the objective reality. This change in camera view as well as acceleration of pacing between each cut provides viewers with a sense of growing panic and loss of control felt by Holly. Moreover, in the jungle gym sequence, I transition between objective (Holly hanging on the bars) and subjective (spider web) views before moving into the full-blown exaggeration. This provides viewers with a unique view of what Holly literally sees, while also experiencing the reality of her physical position in the environment (Figure 4.21).
4.2.2 Tense & Subjective Object

**Elements & Techniques of a Mental Process Narrative Film**

**ELEMENT**
**III. Tense:** The term or period in which the character’s subjective thoughts take place.

**TECHNIQUES**
1) **Present:** Immediate character responses; stream of consciousness, perception
   Example: showing character thought, imagination, exaggeration, or association as it occurs in the present tense

   2) **Past:** Shown via memories or flashbacks

   3) **Future:** Shown via flash-forwards or predictions

   4) **Undefined:** Typically shown via dreams or hallucinations

**ELEMENT**
**IV. Subjective Object:** A thought, emotion, association or attitude of the character
Example: A character is angry and the scene appears red; the subjective object is anger. Or, it is pouring down rain and a character imagines the scene as raining down literal cats and
Table 6. Tense & subjective object techniques in a mental process narrative film

In the film *Holly Hype*, subjectivity takes place within the present tense. Holly’s exaggerations are immediate responses to her surroundings caused by a change in emotion and physical state. The first moment of subjectivity occurs at the start of the film, when viewers are immediately placed within Holly’s subjective mindset of being caught in a tornado. The scene later transitions back to reality, where Holly twirls on a merry go round (Figure 4.22). The metaphor of a twirling tornado as well as use of colors that match the playground equipment suggests an instant response to her situation at hand. The object of subjectivity is her disorientation, physical state of dizziness, and mental association of a tornado.

The second moment of subjectivity occurs while Holly plays on a jungle gym. While hanging upside down, her legs slip and she is suddenly stuck in an upside-down position within the jungle gym (Figure 4.22). The objects of subjectivity are her feelings of panic and claustrophobia and her association of being caught in a spider web surrounded by pointy figures. The third main subjective object occurs when Holly roller skates on the sidewalk. The wheel becomes wobbly, and she loses her balance (Figure 4.22). This change in her physical state changes her emotion from happy to feelings of clumsiness and loss of control, which trigger an association of being on a tightrope. Throughout the film, situations are within the present tense and the subjective objects are Holly’s present emotions and associations.
4.2.3 Subjective Source: Character

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements &amp; Techniques of a Mental Process Narrative Film</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ELEMENT</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>V. Subjective Source: How and where the representation takes place via sources of character, environment, display or sound. There are four main sources in which character psyche is shown: character, environment, display and sound.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TECHNIQUES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) <strong>Character:</strong> Subjective representation is illustrated within the character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Character design as direct reflection of personality and mindset</td>
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<tr>
<td>Example: A character is closed-minded and stubborn thus represented through a square design or boxy shape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Character movement as direct reflection of personality and mindset</td>
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<td>Example: A character feels out of control and moves in a rubbery state as if his or her bones were missing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Proportion changes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Example: A character’s head becomes huge when he feels superior.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Morphing of body parts, pupils, or clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: A character becomes rubbery when she feels extreme exhaustion. Or, a character feels guilty and his clothing changes into a prison suit.</td>
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Table 7. Subjective source: character techniques in a mental process narrative film

Representation takes place via a variety of sources inside the frame. There are particular methods to illustrate subjectivity through the character. First, to represent her unbalanced and exaggerated perspective, Holly’s right, creative eye is much larger than her left. Additionally, subjective portrayal is illustrated through a morphing of the character’s pupil. As Holly’s emotions grow, the irrational creative side overpowers logic and her perception changes. This is indicated by the smaller, left eye color dulling out and the right, inventive eye color becoming dominant by the physical properties of the pupil altering according to her physical state of mind (Figure 4.23). When Holly feels disoriented on the merry-go-round, her pupil design changes into hand-drawn scribbles. These doodles also appear across her skin and clothing (Figure 4.24). Within this sequence of events, the character’s arm and leg range of motion is much wider than the proceeding sequences, signifying her loss of control. While in the tornado, as she is completely removed from reality, she doesn’t move in a natural way. Her body is weightless and she floats about in the tornado, almost as if she was a toy being moved around by an unseen hand. At first, the
character moves in slow motion, suspended in disbelief. As the merry-go-round moves faster, and disorientation grows, movements speed up within both the objects circling the tornado and Holly’s body motion. As the merry-go-round slows and the viewer is brought back into reality, Holly’s body movement appears more fluid, but she moves in slow motion because she is still mentally suspended in a sub-reality where she is weightless.

When Holly feels claustrophobic and stuck in the jungle gym, her pupil is surrounded by a solid, silhouetted spider web. To match this concept, her skin color and clothing changes to a high contrast, grayscale color scheme. When in reality, character range of motion is typical and she moves at a natural speed. However, character movement while in the exaggeration is much stiffer than in other sequences. Her arms remain close to her body and her legs remain tight to represent the fear and anxiety overtaking her. She feels stuck in her situation and thus has little range of motion. When she does move, motion is quick and choppy to signify feelings of panic. After being brought back into reality, movement returns to a natural fluidity and speed.

When feeling wobbly and unbalanced, her pupil undulates in a rubbery state and changes to a highly saturated blue color, appearing less realistic. Her skin and clothing colors alter into highly saturated pinks, oranges, yellows, and they also appear less realistic. In reality, she moves at a normal speed. However, when on the exaggerated tightrope, movement is much quicker, choppier and more frantic. No movement rests; all body parts shake and wobble signifying her feelings of unbalance, as nothing is ever calm or equal. Also, an effect was used to give her entire body a hint of undulating movement that matches with the motion in the rest of the environment. Thus, in exaggerated sequences throughout the film, Holly’s motion is unnatural, while movement and speed in her reality is more realistic. In the
inbetween sequences of her bedroom, Holly’s range of motion is small. This is a setting to relax and partake in a hobby that is less emotionally stimulating than the outdoor playground. Her movements are minimal, as this is a space for concentration and relaxation.

Figure 4.23. Holly pupil transformations

Figure 4.24. Holly’s clothing and skin color transform in the tornado sequence
### Elements & Techniques of a Mental Process Narrative Film

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<tr>
<th>ELEMENT</th>
<th>V. Subjective Source</th>
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#### TECHNIQUES

1) **Environment:** Subjective representation is illustrated within the environment. The subjective environment may be either metaphorical—using abstraction to explain a thought or feeling, or imaginary—what a character truly believes he/she is seeing that is deviant from reality.

   a. Prop and set design as direct reflection of personality and mindset
      Example: A character is closed-minded and stubborn thus his props and setting are represented through a square design/boxy shapes.
   
   b. Lighting or color as direct reflection of thought and emotion
      Example: A character is shown in a single spotlight to represent her feelings of isolation with her environment. Or, a scene is shown in colors of red to indicate anger felt by the character.
   
   c. Skewed perspective and proportion of objects
      Example: A character feels sick and objects appear in exaggerated angles
   
   d. Use of metaphorical objects to represent character associations, feelings and thoughts
      Example: A tornado is shown to indicate a feeling dizziness; a light bulb turns on to indicate a character getting an idea.
   
   e. Shape-shifting objects
      Example: A character doesn’t wear her glasses and a coat rack turns into a person that greets her (shape-shift).
   
   f. Abnormal placement of objects/settings
      Example: A wild animal lays on the living room couch.
   
   g. Abnormal movement or change in physical state
      Example: A character feels unbalanced and settings become rubbery.
   
   h. Non-Diegetic Elements composited over environment for expression
      Example: Polka dots on the screen indicate illness or intoxication.
   
   i. Change in medium/style
      Example: In a live-action film a character falls asleep and the environment turns into the style of a painting.

---

Table 8. Subjective source: environment techniques in a mental process narrative film
Subjective representation in *Holly Hype* is illustrated through a variety of sources within the environment. Prop construction is a direct reflection of the character’s imbalanced physical and mental state. Holly’s bed, dresser, desk, shelves, toy box as well as merry-go-round, jungle gym and tightrope poles are built asymmetrically like the character’s eyes (Figure 4.25). Moreover, there is a direct manipulation of the environment—both metaphorical and imaginary. That is, the character’s associations are meant to serve as exaggerated, metaphorical representations of Holly’s physical and emotional state of mind. Viewers experience her subjective association of the merry-go-round ride through the metaphor of being caught in a tornado, as the world becomes a disheveled and uncontrollable mess in the first sequence of events.

Colors on the tornado switch in position and match the colors on the actual merry go round, which provides a more direct connection between the real and imagined object (Figure 4.26). To represent her feelings of disorientation and instability, the physical properties of objects encircling the tornado become unorganized, unsettled and never appear in a constant form (Figure 4.27). During the experimentation phase of production,
while compositing shots together I discovered the capability of utilizing lighting as a representation of thought. Because the character and background were separately rendered, I was able to separately change their color. As the character’s thoughts return to reality when the merry-go-round slows, Holly is shown in full color and light while the environment appears dark and then slowly fades back into full color (Figure 4.28). This provides viewers with a visual illustration of the slow enlightenment back to reality felt by Holly.

Figure 4.26. Tornado exaggeration

Figure 4.27. A house that circles the tornado changes in form
In the second exaggerated sequence, while playing on a dome jungle gym, Holly begins to feel claustrophobic and trapped within her environment. These feelings are manifested through the visual metaphor of being stuck in a spider web and surrounded by exaggerated, threatening versions of the actual objects around her. As Holly panics, large and pointy grass blades, clovers, shark fruit snacks, dandelions, and a juice box slowly close in on her while she is stuck in a spider web. Objects are abstract, sharp and appear in silhouette to imply a sense of threat and mystery (Figure 4.29). During the experimental phase of creation, I discovered ways to utilize lighting and color as representations of thought. While putting together a 3D blocked animatic, I quickly rendered a few shots of this scene without finishing the lighting. After placing them in sequence with the exaggerated views of the web it became apparent that a slow transition to the imagined silhouetted objects was more appropriate. Thus, while in a growing panic and in a move toward an exaggerated view of events, colors become less saturated, lighting becomes dimmer to make objects appear darker (Figure 4.30).
In the third exaggerated sequence, Holly’s roller skate wheel becomes loose and wobbly, she begins to feel unbalanced, unstable, and somewhat ridiculous. These feelings are represented through a metaphorical environment of being on a tightrope at a circus. All objects within the environment undulate in a rubbery, water-like way. Colors are in highly saturated reds, pinks, yellows, and oranges to symbolize feelings of silliness and high alert.
(Figure 4.31). While in the experimentation phase of the production process, I also discovered how to use textures to indicate mindset. Thus, the three exaggeration sequences, tornado, spider web and tightrope, all utilize a metaphorical environment that possesses a unique style specific to the character's current thoughts and emotions. Objects in these metaphors are in skewed perspective and proportion and move abnormally as direct representations of Holly’s mental and physical state.

Figure 4.31. Highly saturated reds, pinks, and oranges symbolize silliness and alertness.

4.2.5 Subjective Source: Display

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<td>V. Subjective Source</td>
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TECHNIQUES

3) **Display:** Subjective representation comes directly from the camera’s movement, lens or focus that relates directly to character sight.

   a. **Camera Movement:** The camera moves in the same way the character would move
      Example: POV shot
   b. **Camera Angle:** The angle of view represents the subjective way in which the character sees, or a change in angle signifies a change in point of view
      Example: The sudden tilting of the scene represents a change in character perspective.
   c. **Camera Lens:** The lens represents a subjective mindset of the character
      Example: A fisheye lens is used to represent the literal sight of a fish in a bowl.
   d. **Optical Effects:** This technique utilizes effects that directly relate to the vision of the human eye.
      Example: An iris or oval shape makes the scene appear and disappear to indicate blinking; the scene is blurry to indicate blurred vision or a change; camera focus is used to indicate change in focal attention of the character
   e. **Obstruction of View:** This technique relates to a particular feature on the character that prevents the viewer from seeing the entire scene when a POV shot is used.
      Example: A nose tip is shown; a piece of hair blocks the view.

| Table 9. Subjective source: display techniques in a mental process narrative film |

In *Holly Hype*, subjective representation not only comes from the character and environment, but also from the camera. Angles, lens type, and movement have been taken into consideration to achieve the look of an alternative mindset. By animating in a 3D space, I had the ability to borrow camera techniques from live-action film such as manipulating the focal lens and choreographing camera movement to act in place of the character. Through camera angles, I wanted to keep the real world and the world within Holly’s mindset separate from one another. When the camera reveals reality, frame angles are for the most part straight-on, symmetrical views (Figure 4.32). These angles are unexciting and balanced to represent the objective view of the real world. As Holly’s emotions take over and she begins...
to exaggerate, the angle of view becomes tilted or more asymmetrical and the camera focal lens becomes wider causing objects to skew in perspective. When this angle and lens is used, it is an indication to viewers that they have moved into the skewed perspective of Holly’s large inventive eye, where the world is no longer seen on a level plane. It is important to note that I developed these camera angles and lens shape during the experimentation phase of production. When working in three dimensional space, I moved the camera and tested various focal lengths before deciding on a final angle. Although a tilted camera does not always indicate subjective point of view, for the purpose of this film the angle and lens settings metaphorically symbolizes a change in Holly’s perspective.

In addition to camera angle and lens, at times the camera movement is a direct reflection of character movement. An example of this occurs while Holly is in the jungle gym. As she hangs upside down, viewers receive a POV shot while swinging and then slipping further down. In scenes within Holly’s bedroom the camera focus is used to signify a change in focal attention of the character. For example, after knitting for some time, Holly

Figure 4.32. Reality shown in symmetrical views and straight angles

In addition to camera angle and lens, at times the camera movement is a direct reflection of character movement. An example of this occurs while Holly is in the jungle gym. As she hangs upside down, viewers receive a POV shot while swinging and then slipping further down. In scenes within Holly’s bedroom the camera focus is used to signify a change in focal attention of the character. For example, after knitting for some time, Holly
glances out a window. The focus alters from being consistent throughout the frame, to a
defocused bedroom and sharp focus on the jungle gym outside (Figure 4.33). This same
effect occurs when Holly spots a pair of roller skates on her floor. Focus at first appears
balanced within the depth of the frame and then changes to emphasize the skates.
Additionally, when in a POV shot within an exaggeration, an iris is used around the frame
edge to signify an altered perspective of events (Figure 4.33). Thus in addition to mental
subjectivity indicated through camera and lens, optical techniques are also used to portray
perceptual subjectivity.

Figure 4.33. Perceptual subjectivity: camera focus and use of iris

4.2.6 Subjective Source: Sound

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<td>V. Subjective Source</td>
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TECHNIQUES

4) Sound: Subjective representation is an audio element within the film that helps to reveal character psyche.
   a. Narrative soundtrack: Music that exists throughout the entire film that helps to illustrate character thought, emotion, and action.
   b. Emphasis: Emphasizing particular sounds to represent character thought or emotion.
      Example: After stabbing someone, the word knife is emphasized in a loud echo to indicate the murderer’s guilt.
   c. Metaphorical: Sounds or music replaces thoughts, feelings, and emotions of the character.
      Example: A dolphin sound is used to indicate a character’s excitement; a horn honk is used when a character opens his mouth to yell at someone.

To narrow my study, I do not discuss this element in great detail except for within this film, which includes an original musical composition written specifically for the film.

Table 10. Subjective source: sound techniques in a mental process narrative film

Composer T.W. Cory wrote a unique musical narrative soundtrack specifically for this film. Instruments, sounds, pacing, tone, melody and harmonics are all reflections of character emotions and associations. In working with the composer, as the art director, I described the overall mood that I wanted to convey in each sequence of the film. I discussed the character’s physical and mental state and explained how I wanted viewers to relate to her, through choices made in the musical composition. Holly’s emotions, thoughts and current physical state affected decisions on instruments or sound effects used, pitch, harmonics, melody and pacing of music in each sequence.

In the first meeting with the composer, I provided a general summary of what I wanted for the film. Throughout the duration of the soundtrack, I wanted to use more natural sounding instruments as opposed to anything too electronic or synthesized. I felt that this would keep the film grounded in a space that is familiar to viewers as opposed to an
alien world, which could be misinterpreted due to Holly’s strange physical appearance. I also wanted to use some type of transformative sound for the pupil changing. This sound would be repeated throughout the duration of the film. For the tornado sequence I wanted the music to sound chaotic and grow faster in pacing. For the jungle gym sequence I wanted the soundtrack to give hint of mystery and fear. In the tightrope scene I felt the music should use instruments that are associated with a circus and clumsiness like a pipe organ and slide whistles. I described the bedroom sequences as remaining simple and childlike and noted that this was an area where viewers should begin to feel sorry for Holly. In addition to these brief descriptions, I also provided a few music samples that I felt might inspire ideas for each segment. After receiving this information, Cory developed a rough soundtrack, based on my vision as a designer and his interpretation as a musician.

After a first draft of the soundtrack was created, the composer and I met again to discuss areas for improvement and further development. It was the first time that I saw my film’s images laid beside the soundtrack, and I was able to provide more specific details and examples of music choices, having a rough soundtrack as a basis for additional ideas and revisions. For the second version of the soundtrack, I provided specific comments on sound effects, instruments, melody, and pacing for each sequence of the film. To revise music in the tornado sequence the use of an acoustic guitar as opposed to an electric guitar. I wanted the natural sound to function as reminder of the ‘natural’ reality of the situation of being in a playground. I also suggested trying a few real ambient sound effects such as children, cars or bugs. To address the pacing of the story, I requested that the melody and speed not remain consistent throughout, but instead move in and out of synch, speed up and slow
down, and hit the wrong note or key at times. As an example, I referred to the songs *Mikey Bass* and *Toykyo* by the band The Books.

For the *inbetween* sequences in Holly’s bedroom, I wanted the music to remain consistent, to match the mundane hobby of knitting in the safety of her bedroom. However, Cory’s interpretation of the melody for this sequence in the first soundtrack draft sounded too mature and sad for the character. For the second draft, I described how this sequence should reflect the childlike atmosphere of her bedroom. As an example of childlike music, I referred to the music in the 2006 animated short *Handy* by Dir. Jean-Philippe Florin. I suggested using instruments that sounded more innocent, such as a harp, music box, recorder or baby piano. I didn’t want the music to convey sadness but instead either innocence or relaxation. Also, by the end of the knitting segments, she is relaxed, so I stated that the pacing of the music within the bedroom sequences should become slower.

I told Cory how the jungle gym sequence is about a growing anxiety within Holly, and I suggested incorporating a sound that reflects this concept by having it grow in intensity, becoming more noticeable by the time she is stuck in the web. I also recommended adding a plucky, ‘tip-toe,’ sound that is associated with fear or mystery. Along with these suggestions, I provided a few more specific cues to hit. For example, when viewers receive a POV shot of Holly slipping from her knees to her feet while hanging upside-down on the jungle gym, it wasn’t clear that this change in position had occurred. I asked the composer to use a noise that would indicate this slip on that particular cue point. During moments when viewers receive a subjective view of the web before the eye transition, I requested that a threatening sound be used for each of these POV shots, and I provided specific cue points for each occurrence. As an example, I referred to the background sound used in *Take it Easy*
on Kathy by Andrew Graham & Swarming Branch and The Hand by Bruno Coulais in the Coraline soundtrack.

Last, in the roller skating sequence, for the second draft of music, I added a few comments on specific cues to hit with sound. During the event in which the screw on Holly’s wheel falls off, I wanted an off-beat sound to happen, such as hitting a wrong or flat note, to make this occurrence more apparent to viewers. In this sequence, before her perspective changes, viewers observe Holly’s wobbly, uncontrollable physical state. As she begins to wobble, I wanted the music to begin moving in and out of synch before completely transitioning into the tightrope act sequence. Furthermore, at the end of the tightrope sequence Holly falls off the wire. I requested that a sound be used to indicate the fall on that cue point.

After the second draft of specific comments for additions and revisions, Cory further developed the soundtrack. The final product was a result of communication and teamwork between my vision as a designer and Cory’s interpretation as a musician. Within the final score we arrived at the following music and sounds that enhance the action of the film. In the opening sequence of the perspective change from left to right eyes, an old film-projector sound is used to symbolize that the large eye is a projector from which representation derives. A magical and transformative sound is used when the pupil changes form. This signifies a move into an altered perspective and is repeated throughout each ‘perspective change’ sequence.

In the first tornado sequence, the music is layered between sound effects of children’s laughter, birds, a ‘whirly sound,’ guitar strings and a flute to create feelings of distortion and chaos, such as those emotions felt by the character. The pacing of the music
increases to match the pacing of the film, and the melody moves in and out of synch to match the constant changing forms of objects within the scene. Layers of sound are removed as the character returns to reality. The section of music while on the merry-go-round at the very end of the sequence is not a direct reflection of character thought, emotion, or association and may thus be considered objective. When returning to the bedroom, a music box plays. The sequence is meant to represent the innocence of the character and calming nature of knitting in her bedroom. Toward the end of the sequence, as Holly’s attention becomes focused elsewhere, the music slows and eventually stops, signifying her lack of attention on the task of knitting.

While on the jungle gym, in Holly’s exaggeration of the spider web, high-pitched tip-toe and screech sounds are used to match up with each transition from real to imagined objects. These sounds are often associated with fear and mystery, thus providing an appropriate representation of the character’s current mental state. When in the full-blown exaggeration, a didgeridoo instrument, once blending in with the soundtrack, becomes more prominent signifying the growing anxiety felt by Holly as objects close in on her. The instrument is also abstract and resembles the sound of buzzing as if it were an amplified sound of a bee or fly in her reality.

Within the roller skating sequence, Holly’s wheel becomes loose and she begins to wobble. A drum beat is used to reflect her physical state of mind and comically moves in and out of synch as she stumbles. Music then transitions into a layered soundtrack of a pipe organ, whistles, and faint children screams. These instruments and sound effects are associated with circus music and represent the silliness and clumsiness felt by the character.
as she struggles to maintain her balance. Instruments, sound effects, pacing, harmony and melody all directly reflect the character’s mental process while in the exaggerated sequences.

### 4.2.7 Rationale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENT</th>
<th>VI. Rationale</th>
<th>TECHNIQUES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rationale: This is the condition of consciousness that is represented to explain why a particular subjective view is being shown. There are several different types of rationale that a story may be centered on in order to provide viewers with an explanation and perhaps acceptance of subjective events through the character. Rationale includes:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) <strong>Flashback/Memory:</strong></td>
<td>Often characterized by seamless transitions and unknown durations of time</td>
<td><strong>TECHNIQUES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Elliptical editing: shot transitions omit parts of an event causing an ellipses in plot and story duration</td>
<td>1) <strong>Flashback/Memory:</strong> This is a prediction, fear, or hope of a future event</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>b. Dissolve transitions: seamless transitions from one event to another and typically implies that time has passed (without stating the amount of time)</td>
<td>2) <strong>Flash-forward:</strong> This is a prediction, fear, or hope of a future event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) <strong>Flash-forward:</strong></td>
<td>This is a prediction, fear, or hope of a future event</td>
<td>3) <strong>Hallucination:</strong> May be substance, illness, or pain induced. Often characterized by seamless transitions and unknown durations of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a. Elliptical editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b. Dissolve transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) <strong>Imagination:</strong></td>
<td>A controlled result of play or enjoyment.</td>
<td>5) <strong>Exaggeration:</strong> An uncontrolled association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) <strong>Exaggeration:</strong></td>
<td>An uncontrolled association.</td>
<td>6) <strong>Dream:</strong> Often characterized by seamless transitions and unknown durations of time</td>
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<td>b. Dissolve transitions</td>
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<tr>
<td>7) <strong>Full character embodiment:</strong></td>
<td>“In his shoes” Explanation that the viewer IS the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7) **Full character embodiment:** | “In his shoes” Explanation that the viewer IS the
character and thus receives only a subjective viewpoint.

8) **Psychorealism:** Imagery that conveys emotional realism rather than photorealism; a realm where a character’s inner thoughts are expressed outwardly. (No other logic is given as to why this view is shown.)
   Example: When a character is angry, spikes come out of his head; when he feels a loss of control, his skin becomes rubbery.

9) **Unknown:** No rationale explains why a subjective viewpoint is shown.

Table 11. Rationale techniques in a mental process narrative film

In *Holly Hype*, the majority of rationale for subjective viewpoint is that the audience witnesses the character’s amplified view of situations from real life as different from others (Figure 4.34). In this case, the reasoning for subjective portrayals stems from the main theme of the story, which is exaggeration. Because events are immediate responses to situations, exaggerated events are not to be considered flashbacks or memories. The audience receives both objective and subjective points of view. Thus, they are not meant to fully embody the character, but only to understand thoughts, emotions, and associations of the character, and to feel empathy for Holly. POV shots are provided to allow the audience to gain a better understanding of the character’s line of sight during that moment in time. Because exaggeration is the reason given for illustrating subjective point of view, the rationale is not considered psychorealism.
Upon receiving feedback from others and through my own analysis of the film, as a viewer, I drew several conclusions about viewer identification achieved in the animatic and final versions of *Holly Hype*. The three parts of viewer identification are recognition, alignment, and allegiance as stated by Murray Smith. Each type of identification, depending on the depth of information provided, leads into the next level of engagement with the character. Through the trial and error story concepting process described in the sections above, I found that the key ingredients to building recognition in an animated short film is simplification of story, immediately establishing the character’s unique features and personality, and acknowledging the conflict early in the film. In choosing to simplify the story about a character and her exaggerating eye, the plot of the story remains clear. In the first minutes of the film, recognition of the character and the root of her struggles are established with the film immediately beginning with a close-up of the character’s eyes changing.
Thus, viewers immediately recognize Holly as physically different from themselves. By opening the film with an exaggeration of reality, tornado to merry-go-round, viewers also understand the unique mindset of the character. Moreover, when she returns to her bedroom, viewers are given the information needed to understand Holly’s more relaxing hobby of knitting. Book covers state knitting as a source of therapy and a task only remotely exciting. A basketball, tennis balls, and a kick ball are placed in a toy box among several yarn balls, which she picks up rather than one of the more playful items. Through this chosen order of events presented in the film’s introduction, viewers become immediately immersed in the narrative with the character and are not distracted by attempts to decipher what is happening.

Upon understanding the character’s identity, viewers align with the character in a variety of ways such as narrowed spatial attachment, subjective access to character thoughts, feelings, associations and perceptual alignment through POV shots. In a short-film, I found that in order to promote the greatest amount of identification, spatial attachment with one or two characters is best. Within this film, spatial attachment is only focused on the main character. No other characters appear in the film to distract viewers from Holly’s perceptions. I emphasize subjective access alignment to provide viewers with access to the character’s mental process during all significant moments. I use a few point of view shots to provide viewers direct access to see what the character sees and understand what the character is specifically focused on.

While recognition and alignment require that the spectator understands the traits and mental states that make up Holly’s character, allegiance is achieved when viewers evaluate and respond emotionally to the events within the narrative. Within the narrative I establish a
context for Holly’s struggle through her physical and mental imbalance. And, in creating specific circumstances that trigger metaphorical, exaggerated sequences, viewers may understand the extent of her desires, thoughts, feelings, and associations. Thus, the door is opened for an emotional and cognitive response with the character through sympathy and empathy. The bedroom sections are meant to provide a calm and reflective moment on the character’s innocence and struggles with the exciting outdoors. It is a moment when viewers may start to root for the character to escape from her traumatic world of fantasy and find a solution to live a more ‘normal’ life. In creating the mental process narrative film *Holly Hype*, I utilize all three types of identification in narrative content, thus allowing viewers to engage with characters on an emotional and cognitive level.
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Summary and Evaluation of the Practice in Creating a Mental Process Narrative Film

Throughout this study of creating a mental process narrative film, I utilized an emergent methodology where stories are grounded in research through observation and contextual review of techniques, but the solutions to produce the short films are accomplished through a process of reflection in and on action. The Thurber applied study films are stories created after initial observations and research of subjective portrayals in a select number of mainstream films. Then I produced a final table of elements and techniques that portray a character’s mental process. I created Holly Hype armed with more informed thinking about subjective techniques and implemented several methods from the chart in both the planning and development phase of film production.

5.1.1 Dog Asleep, Hunting Hounds, and He Goes with His Owner in to Bars: Conclusions

To produce the first Thurber applied study film Dog Asleep, I decided on a main theme of a dog’s dream for the story and looked at films that incorporated dream sequences in order to understand techniques used to illustrate character subjectivity. I finalized the story by applying these premade conventional techniques of incorporating memories and using
elliptical editing into the film. Upon observation of the finished film, I concluded that while it did illustrate a character’s thoughts, it did not fully demonstrate his emotions or associations of events. The brainstorming process was rather successful in first examining already established techniques for that particular story theme. However, simply reapplying them to a new story without regard to the individuality of the character did not provide a new contribution to the study on illustrating character psyche.

For the next Thurber applied study film, I again used the process of identifying a theme, and then researching filmmaking to illustrate subjectivity within that theme. For the film *Hunting Hounds*, I engaged in an extra step of analysis that established subjectivity in relationship to the character’s individuality. In this case it led to thinking more deeply about ‘how’ the character thinks and sees as opposed to ‘what.’ This provided positive reinforcement that it is important to customize each technique according to the uniqueness of the story and character. Only then can a real contribution be made to the topic on illustrating character mental process, as opposed to an application of what has already been done. With increased success in communicating subjectivity in the previous film, for the last Thurber applied study *He Goes with His Owner into Bars* I again used a brainstorming process of deciding on a theme, conducting research on subjective techniques within that theme, and then customizing the technique according to the character’s unique situation.

In deciding upon techniques to use within this story to express the character’s drunk experience, I not only considered the uniqueness of the character’s situation, but also where subjectively demonstrating the theme of being drunk was lacking. With a limited implementation of portraying meaningful, mental associations of the character’s physical environment, I incorporated metaphorical as well as exaggerated scenarios of the dog’s
drunken state of mind. This resulted in a unique story that uses symbolic events to portray the level of intoxication, physical dizziness, and a stream of consciousness of events surrounding the dog. Viewers may understand not only what the dog sees, but also how and why he sees, leading to a deeper involvement between spectator and character. Thus, I concluded that contributions to the subject of creating a mental process narrative film might also be achieved from a consideration of what has not yet been done or is not often done.

Each Thurber applied study film acts as part of a cumulative process of discovering ways of visually communicating a character's mental process. Upon the development of each film, new discoveries were made about the process of creating a story and then applying subjective techniques that illustrate mental process of that narrative (Table 12). However, because of the time limitations and deadlines for finishing the films, there wasn't a lot of time for experimentation within the actual production phase. Rather, the concepts were already laid out within my storyboards and animatics and then applied by a team of students working on the film. Therefore, because new discoveries were not made during the creation process of the actual animation, the Thurber applied study films were more about planning and story development for a mental process narrative film.

5.1.2 Holly Hype Conclusions

Within the film Holly Hype however, new discoveries in portraying mental subjectivity were made during both the story development and production phases (Table 12). Holly Hype provided a vehicle for using a different method of creating a mental process narrative film as well as added a dimension of design, color and style to illustrate character subjectivity that the Thurber film production restrictions did not provide. In beginning process of creating
the film, I first attempted to use the similar strategy of planning all story and visual
techniques before producing the scenes in the film. I soon found that trying to plan out all
subjective filmmaking techniques before attempting to make anything not only slowed
development but also restricted the formulation of new and unexpected discoveries during
the creation process. I needed a basic story to provide direction in asset design and
animation, but I developed new ideas for portraying the character’s mental state through
experimentation with the camera in the three-dimensional virtual space, trying different
effects and compositions, and rearranging the order of sequences and timing in editing.
There were also ‘happy accidents’ when adding what was originally meant to be temporary
ideation phases for textures, lighting, scenes, or animation, and discovering that it produced
an unexpected effect that was actually appropriate for the shot.
Table 12. Applied Study Film Process: from concept to completion

**APPLIED STUDY FILM PROCESS: CONCEPT TO COMPLETION**

**Research & Planning**

- Initial research and film observation on subjective portrayal in film
  - △ □ ★ ○

- New story concept: decide on a theme
  - △ □ ★ ○

- Research techniques within that theme
  - △ □ ★ ○

- Analyze current techniques: identify room for improvement, what’s missing, what is good
  - ★ ○

- Examine uniqueness of your character & story; customize existing technique or make something new
  - □ ★ ○

**Development**

- Visualization: implement techniques in storyboard
  - △ □ ★ ○

- Review and Feedback
  - △ □ ★ ○

- Visualization: implement techniques in animatic
  - △ □ ★ ○

- Review and Feedback
  - △ □ ★ ○

- Production: Assets and Animation
  - □ ★ ○

- Experimentation in production
  - ○

**KEY:** △ *Dog Asleep*  □ *Hunting Hounds*  ★ *He Goes with His Owner into Bars*  ○ *Holly Hype*
5.1.3 Evaluating the Chart of *Elements and Techniques in a Mental Process Narrative Film*

During the practice of creating applied study mental process narrative films, I have also established a table of elements and techniques that visually communicate character subjectivity (Tables 5–11). The final chart (Table 13) serves a multitude of purposes for filmmakers, designers, storytellers, animators, and even viewers. It is a gathering in one place of these specific ideas for animators and filmmakers to reference. Reviewing the list of areas and techniques of a mental process narrative film may provide one with inspiration when creating a story. One may choose a category from the ready-made list of possibilities to illustrate subjective mindset within a narrative film and reapply or readapt these techniques in his or her own stories and films. Or, one may develop a new idea after consideration of what is not included in my list. The chart also supplies guidance to those who already have a story and want to incorporate methods of subjective portrayal. This may be in a mental process narrative film or in a film that has one or two sequences of a character’s subjective mindset. The list of elements and techniques that may be useful as an analytical guide for film critics, viewers, and filmmakers to discuss and review subjectivity in a film.
5.2 Limitations & Next Steps in Creating a Mental Process Narrative Film

In the study of portraying subjectivity in film, I do not go into great depth in analyzing experimental, non-narrative filmmaking practices. Furthermore, I do not focus on many non-American films. Instead, the scope of this paper is narrowed to provide a brief
overview on subjective representation in traditional and non-traditional film. And, the
discussion is limited to present methods for incorporating a character’s mental process into
the framework of classical Hollywood cinematic conventions in the medium of a short,
narrative animation. Thus, as a next step in the film theory section of creating a mental
process narrative film, I would begin looking deeper into subjective representation in
experimental, non-narrative live-action and animated film that diverged from and influenced
mainstream filmmaking practices both past and present. This would include examples that
exist outside of America. As an animator, I would place emphasis on how these genres of
film have influenced present day, mainstream feature and short length animation.

Furthermore, although I explore various methods of creating a mental process
narrative film as well as provide a multitude of visual examples demonstrating subjective
portrayal techniques, there are still areas for further exploration. Due to the large number of
possibilities for illustrating character mindset in film, I could only provide a few examples
within my own work. The techniques that are least explored are in demonstrating a
simultaneous or continuous continuity of subjectivity. I only use alternating subjectivity.
Also, I do not explore the alteration or addition of physical geometry to the character to
show mental state and computer animation is clearly well-suited to these techniques. Nor do
I provide an in-depth discussion or examples of sound effects and music that illustrates
color character mindset. These are all areas that could be further explored in continuing this study.

As a next step in the film practice section of this study, I would begin by taking a
short well-known story, perhaps a fairy tale or nursery rhyme, and animate the story in four
ways using a different subjective source for each film. First, I would produce the story
showing no subjectivity. The same story and animation would then be used, but subjective
sound would be added. As a next step, I would produce the story using techniques that illustrate the character’s mental and physical state outside of the character’s body, within the environment and display. Finally, I would construct the story using subjective portrayal techniques on the character alone.

All four films would then be screened independently to different audiences to analyze how these methods effect viewer’s entry into the narrative and interpretation of events. They could also be screened simultaneously on duel screens to compare how these techniques might complement, hinder, or alter viewer interpretation of events. This would provide a concrete measure of the effectiveness of viewer engagement and understanding when using sound, character, environment and display as a source for subjective representation as well as an improved analysis of how they might work in unison or separately. It would also offer filmmakers an example to refer to when deciding on an area of mental subjectivity to utilize based on their desire for achieving specific level of viewer engagement.

In addition to a limitation of utilized techniques within my own applied studies, I was not able to formally evaluate viewer response to my films. The Thurber films were performed before a large audience; however, no question and answer sessions were conducted to fully understand what audiences took with them after viewing the films. The examination of viewer reaction to these applied studies is based on the knowledge gained in studying types of viewer identification as well as noting peer and professor review and feedback. Moreover, the analysis of viewer identification with Holly Hype is based on peer and professor feedback of various storyboards and animatics within the production process of the film. Therefore, as a next step in the analysis of viewer engagement within my
own applied studies, I would conduct formal audience response surveys to rank the levels of emotional connection to the characters within these films. Qualitative surveys asking specific questions about the effectiveness of particular techniques used in each film could be administered. I would question how viewers might personally relate to the character within each film, and if there was a time when they felt sympathy or empathy with the character. Additionally, I would ask what moment or visuals stood out most or what qualities in the film did they find most appealing or unappealing.

5.3 Ways to Diverge from this Study?

Due to the vast possibilities in the topic of creating a mental process narrative film, there are various ways that the scope of this study could further incorporate mental subjectivity into conventions of American mainstream motion pictures. Within my examination, I only review short and feature films, with the exception of a few Felix television cartoons. However, I have observed several examples of illustrating character mindset in American cartoon shows. In fact, the idea of illustrating the real verses imagined scenarios of a character’s mindset came from 2D cartoons such as *Muppet Babies* and *Rugrats*, which transition between an objective view of children playing and a subjective view of their imagination. It would be interesting to compare and discuss subjective portrayal techniques used in animated television shows as well as short and feature films. In addition to animated television shows, techniques of illustrating character mindset within live-action television programs might also be compared to cartoon series. Discussing subjectivity in both 2D and 3D animated television shows, as well as examining the
difference between showing character mindset in older verses present-day 3D animations would be interesting to further explore.

As 3D technology advances, so does knowledge and experimentation in animation. For example, *Jimmy Neutron* is a 2002 animated television show with little expressivity utilizing the animation medium and includes few examples of mental subjectivity, with the exception of traveling into Jimmy’s brain to show the formulation of an idea. In the 2009 version of *Fan Boy and Chum Chum*, characters, environments and objects often morph and change thus allowing for more opportunity to show character mindset. This may indicate the beginning of a trend in more frequent use of subjective portrayal in animation. In mainstream feature-length 3D films, one may notice a recent shift to showing moments of mental subjectivity through mixing mediums of 2D and 3D. Thus as technology continues to improve and change, it seems probable that we will continue observing trends toward including character mental process in animated films. Animators and designers have the power to integrate both real and surreal aspects of character mindset in a seamless fashion, exploring techniques of subjective portrayals where ideas and emotions are represented through indirect expression.
LIST OF REFERENCES


ENDNOTES


6 (Left) Rotoscope from live action tape (unused film from *Snow White*), YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Wgm2OzDYVo. (Right) Pictured in the center, Rico LeBrun, an established Italian artist, was employed at the Disney studio in the late ’30s to help teach the studio’s artists to learn how to draw animals. http://www.michaelsporname.com/splog/?m=200806.


13 Ratatouille, dir. Brad Bird and Jan Pinkava, Pixar Animation Studios, distr. Walt Disney Pictures, 2007. DVD.


15 Horton Hears a Who, dir. Jimmy Hayward and Steve Martino, Blue Sky Studios, distr. 20th Century Fox, 2008. DVD.


17 Thurber's Dogs (d'Note Classics CD-DND-1010), 1995. Left to Right: Dog Asleep, Hunting Hounds, He Goes with His Owner into Bars


21 A Dog's Life, PlayStation 2, Frontier Developments, SCEE. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog%27s_Life


23 The Last Laugh, Dir. F.W. Murnau, Dist. UFA, 1924.


26 *Vincent*, Dir. Tim Burton, Walt Disney Productions, Dist. Touchstone Home Video Buena Vista, 1982. DVD.


28 *4 Legs are Better than 1*, Holly Story Version 1, Dir. Amber Cecil, 2008. Storyboard.


