

**'BIG MAN',
AN ANIMATED FILM WITH AN ACCOMPANYING
ANALYSIS OF ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE
THEORY AND PRACTICE OF ART AND
ANIMATION**

by

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DECLARATION

I, Michelle Stewart, declare that

The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. This thesis does not contain text, data, pictures, graphs or other information obtained from another person or source, unless specifically acknowledged as being so obtained. This thesis does not contain any other person's writing, unless specifically acknowledged. Where such written sources have been used then they have always been acknowledged through the use of in-text quotation marks or indented paragraphs with accompanying in-text references and in the bibliography. This thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged through in-text references and in the bibliography.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	vi
PREFACE	x
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Overview of the study	1
1.2 Re-imagining the biblical narrative	3
1.3 ‘Big Man’ and the traditions of Western art and animation	7
1.4 The ‘Big Man’ and the traditions of South African art and animation	8
1.5 Chapter outline.....	10
CHAPTER 2 CONCEPTUALISING THE VISUAL COMPONENT OF THE PROJECT	13
2.1 A brief overview	13
2.2 The initial visual narrative	13
2.3 Storyboarding Dr HF Verwoerd’s funeral, ‘Prologue’ scene	22
2.4 Exhibition works.....	24
CHAPTER 3 THE ‘BIG MAN’ THEME	34
3.1 A brief overview	34
3.2 The ‘Big Man’ in Africa	35
3.2.1 The early emergence of ‘Big Men’ and the concept of the dictator in Ancient Rome	42
3.2.2 The ‘Big Man’: Precedents in South African art	43
3.2.3 William Kentridge and Robert Hodgins: Ubu and the ‘Big Man’-inspired imagery.....	44
3.2.4 ‘Big Man’ images of Jacob Zuma: Brett Murray, Ayanda Mabulu and Jonathan Zapiro	69
3.3 The influence of Francis Bacon’s ‘Papal Series’ and William Blake’s ‘Nebuchadnezzar’ engravings on the ‘Big Man’ theme of the film	92
CHAPTER 4 TRADITIONAL ANIMATION PROCESSES AND THE DIGITAL PLATFORM IN ‘BIG MAN’	115
4.1 A brief overview	115

4.2 The exploration of paper cut-out animation: ‘Prologue’ scene (Dr HF Verwoerd’s funeral)	116
4.3 The integration of digital imagery within the cut-out animation process, ‘Prologue’ scene (Dr HF Verwoerd’s funeral)	142
4.4 The combination of frame-by-frame, paper-based and cel animation and paper cut-out animation in the ‘Prologue’ scene (BJ Vorster’s inauguration speech).....	152
4.5 The integration of digital imagery, ‘Prologue’ scene	161
4.6 The paint-on-glass process, ‘Epilogue’ scene.....	164
4.7 The integration of the paint-on-glass approach with live footage, ‘Banishment’ scene	172
CHAPTER 5 THE DIGITAL PLATFORM AND ‘BIG MAN’	178
5.1 A brief overview	178
5.2 TheFlash platform, embedded knowledge, authoring software and digital creativity	179
5.3 The frame-by-frame and 2D puppet animation created in theFlash platform for ‘Big Man’	185
5.3.1 The frame-by-frame process in Flash	186
5.3.2 Frame-by frame animation using pixel-based graphics	198
5.4 Digital puppet animation in ‘Big Man’	204
5.5 The visual and conceptual integration of digital photographic imagery and live footage in theFlash-animated scenes	214
CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION	223
6.1 Independent 2D experimental animation and the digital platform	223
6.2 The importance of the PhD study to research and academic development	227
6.3 ‘Big Man’ and its relevance to the contemporary South African context	229
BIBLIOGRAPHY	233
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	244
APPENDIX 1: NOTES ON SOUND.....	254

ABSTRACT

The focus of this practice-based PhD study is the production of an experimental, 2D animated short film of 10 minutes, 27 seconds, titled *Big Man*.

The animated film is a retelling of several episodes that are found in chapters two and four of *The Book of Daniel* from the Old Testament in which Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, has troubled dreams that can only be interpreted by the Hebrew prophet Daniel. In the film, this biblical story is re-imagined using the former South African Prime Minister, Mr Balthazar Johannes (BJ) Vorster as the character of Nebuchadnezzar, thus linking the narrative directly to South African history. This is done using a variety of animation techniques, including stop-motion paper cut-out animation, digital and traditional hand-drawn frame-by-frame and cel animation, digital puppet animation and paint-on-glass animation.

The written component of this research provides a detailed explanation of the conceptual, technical and creative approaches used in the making of the film prior to, during and post production, and locates the film within the contexts of animation and fine arts practice in South Africa. In addition, the theoretical component discusses the concept of the 'Big Man', the particular literary, theoretical and visual influences at work in the film, and the adaptation of the biblical narrative from its origins to its re-imagining as a fictional, South African narrative explored through the medium of experimental animation.

Practice-based research is essentially interdisciplinary, as one is approaching a study through both practice and theory (Elkins 2009). Thus research methods and aims can be applied to both aspects of the study and can differ quite radically, as textual research is clearly not the same as research through creative practice. This makes it impossible to come up with a single research question. Research that originates through practice involves a complexity of technical, conceptual, visual and aesthetic areas of exploration and approaches specific to creative practice, whereas the associated written component critically and cognitively engages with and supports the practice through theory. In terms of assessment the PhD project comprises a 50/50 split between practice and theory. The following questions cover the scope of my exploration in both the practice and textual components of my study:

Does the film represent the theme of the “Big Man” in such a way as to make it relevant to both the South African context and to a broader international audience?

At the outset the objective of this project was to use the theme of the “Big Man” to explore notions of power, and, in particular, to comment on the present political climate in South Africa with an emphasis on the rising conception of President Jacob Zuma as South Africa's most recent “Big Man”. The intention was to explore this idea implicitly, through the guise of the past, using former apartheid Prime Minister BJ Vorster as the central character of the film. A motivation for casting BJ Vorster as the biblical character of Nebuchadnezzar is that the biblical king is a famous, archetypal Big Man, whereas BJ Vorster is not necessarily widely known outside South Africa. Also, using *The Book of Daniel* from the Old Testament as the overarching narrative was intended to place the narrative within a broader understanding, beyond the South African context. The primary intention was for the film to convey this theme and narrative to its audience in a visually, conceptually and aesthetically coherent way. The textual component aims to reflect critically on the various visual, aesthetic and conceptual methods the film uses to engage with both the theme of the Big Man and the biblical narrative. This component also aims to engage with the relevance of the notion of the “Big Man” in terms of notable precedents in the creative and performing arts in South Africa.

What are the interdisciplinary and research potentials of the experimental animation platform?

While my film uses a narrative form associated with orthodox animation, the use of a multiplicity of styles and approaches is more commonly associated with the experimental tradition (Wells 2002: 42). One objective in creating this film was to extend my creative and conceptual knowledge of art-making and animation by creating an independent, experimental animated film. I chose to make an experimental film due to my interest in learning, using and integrating a variety of creative processes within a filmic medium. My methods and aims included using and extending my skills and interest in the fine arts, digital image-making and 2D digital animation. The film's identity within the experimental tradition, and the successful use and integration of a variety of creative processes is hopefully evident in the artwork itself. The methods of researching and applying these diverse approaches are illuminated in the course of the textual component.

How can the digital platform act as both a medium and a tool for the animation process?

A significant objective of this project was to explore the digital platform on the one hand as a tool for facilitating the animation process, and on the other hand as a medium for creating digital animation. The film accessed the traditional stop-motion animation processes of paper cut-out animation and paint-on-glass animation. As these are labour-intensive processes, I aimed to find ways of using the digital platform as tool to facilitate and speed up this process. I also had to find ways of integrating diverse traditional and digital styles and approaches. In order to do this, while I had previous knowledge of digital cinema technology, I had to learn to process and integrate these hybrid techniques in film editing and production suites at a more advanced level than I had previously used. In terms of accessing the digital platform as a medium with which to create animation, I aimed to develop my skills in digital, hand-drawn, frame-by-frame animation and learn 2D puppet animation using the Flash animation platform.

To what extent do the visual conceptualisation, planning and preparation for the film represent valid research methods?

The general consensus within practice-based research is that the practice forms a significant part of the research (Elkins 2009). While to some extent the investigation is seen to be made visible in the culminating creative work, other modes of investigation applied during the practice may not be apparent in the end product. These include storyboarding the narrative, the initial visual and aesthetic conceptualisation, and the technical planning. Some commentators suggest that these processes can be recorded in the form of a diary (Frayling 1994). I have chosen to incorporate them into the written component. In this way the textual component aims to elucidate and document the visual methods of investigation applied during the creative process. The objective is to clarify this visual exploration as valid research, without which there would be no film. It is important to note that while such visual processes are major aspects of the research, other forms of non-visual investigation also apply and are an essential part of the planning process as well. The theme of the “Big Man”, for example, required both visual and theoretical exploration. However, for the sake of clarity, these aspects of the research are dealt with separately to the visual research process.

Keywords: animation practice, South African visual art, Western visual art, the Big Man, Nebuchadnezzar, digital animation, traditional animation, experimental animation

PREFACE

A contextualisation of this PhD study as it relates to practice-based research in the creative arts both in the South African paradigm and in terms of international discourse and debate

Overview

This PhD is practice-based and comprises a 50/50 split between practice and theory. Practice-based research in art¹ is a relatively new development within universities in South Africa, including this institution, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), where there is still a certain amount of uncertainty around such research. Thus, this preface serves to clarify the practice-based nature and structure of this PhD study both as it relates to the parameters set by this institution and as it relates to the broader discourse and debate around the notion of practice-based research in art. The parameters for this PhD project were approved by this institution — the proposal for this particular practice-based PhD study being one of the first of its kind to be approved (in art) at UKZN. However, in the face of the uncertainty that has surrounded the practice-based nature of this study (during both the proposal and submission stage) at the higher institutional level, this discussion aims to clarify the nature of the study in terms of international precedents, debates and discourse. It also serves to highlight the problems surrounding practice-based research and creative outputs in the creative arts at both the government and university level in South Africa.

The parameters for this research project were drawn from international precedents because since the time of this project's conception in 2008 there have been no clearly established criteria for practice-based research in art within South African universities or within the broader discourse of practice-based research in art in South Africa at the level of a PhD.

¹Much of the discourse and debate around practice-based research in art applies equally to the performing arts. However, although there are instances where the discussion does refer to practice-based research in the performing arts to illuminate the argument, this discussion will focus mainly on practice-based research in the creative arts, due to the nature of the PhD study.

The research proposal that was approved for this project at UKZN states that this PhD is a practice-based study and that the research comprises of an artwork (an animated film) and a reflective written component that supports and critically engages with the aesthetic, conceptual and technical processes at work within the film.

Definition of terms

I have elected to use the term “practice-based PhD” for my study. However, this term, according to James Elkins in his book, *Artists with PhDs: On the New Doctoral Degree in Studio Art*, can be interchangeable with “PhD in studio art”, “creative practice research”, “practice as research” and the “interdisciplinary creative arts PhD” (2009: xi). These terms can also be associated with “practice-led research” — a term Elkins does not refer to — but in some instances is used to denote the same type of research (Rust, Mottram & Till 2007: 9). However, it is important to note that while these terms may be undifferentiated within much of the dominant discourse on research and art, they are not always neutral and can sometimes apply to specific criteria within certain institutions — criteria not necessarily shared within the broader understanding of other variants of the terms (Elkins 2009: xi). Generally these terms collectively refer to research in art wherein the creative processes and/or the art object itself are a significant component of the research (Rust, Mottram & Till 2007: 11). Given the vast and varied nature of this subject, this definition is not entirely helpful in determining clear criteria for what such research comprises, but it is at least all-inclusive and does attempt to set some boundaries.

The location of this practice-based study as it relates to international discourse, debate and precedents

In this practice-based study, the research begins with the practice, the creation of the film (and carries over into the textual elucidation of the practice). To justify the idea of practice as comprising research, I refer to Julien Klein’s article, “What is Artistic Research?” (2010). I agree with Klein that the research process does not only evolve from practice, but is there and can be measured from the outset, from the “level of artistic experience” (2010: 5). In Klein’s hypothesis, research of this nature is measurable in the methods of artistic production (which are inherent in, but not exclusive to, artistic practice). While many of these methods are integrated into and made visible in the final artwork, others are visually and textually documented, explained and contextualised in the written component. In

Klein's view, due to the dynamic and complex nature of artistic knowledge, these measurable methods of research can potentially move between the textual analysis and the creative practice. However, he asserts, that if artistic practice as research is to have any relevance at all, the practice needs to be recognised as the primary source of knowledge and research — in that such knowledge can only be acquired through creative or artistic experience. In this regard, Klein discounts the notion that reflection on practice can only occur at a distance or outside of the creative process (2010: 4–5). Rather he posits that “artistic experience is a form of reflection” (2010: 5) — in other words, it is a process that requires contemplation, interpretation, analysis and elucidation. Nonetheless, Klein concurs that reflection can also occur at the phase of theoretical analysis and textual explanation.

Most commentators agree that this type of research, where practice forms a major part of the enquiry, should be accompanied by a written component. Institutions with established practice-based PhDs in art, as in those in the United Kingdom for example, usually require a 50/50 balance between practice and writing. It is generally expected that the practice must comprise a significant part of the enquiry; however, the scope of the written component can vary fairly radically, ranging from a simple discursive account of the practice (such as a catalogue or a technical report ranging from 300–10 000 words) to a substantial thesis of between 30 000–40 000 words. The most common expectations of the written component appear to be that it either provides a substantial critical analysis and reflection of the practice and its outcomes, or it offers a broader exploration of the historical and disciplinary contexts of the practice (Elkins 2009: 12). The written component for this study subscribes to the former approach, in that is a critical explanation and analysis that aims to do justice to and elucidate the practice.

Because of the vagueness around the notion of practice-based research in South Africa, and within my institution, my original research proposal was informed by international discourse, commentaries and approaches to practice-based research in art. The parameters for the practice-based outcome for this PhD project, an animated film, were influenced by and are similar to those followed for practice-based PhD projects in art, including action research-by-project studies, documented at the Royal College of Art in the late 1990s. While at this time the practice-based approach to research was still a developing area within the Royal College of Arts, the project area and object-based outcome of these

studies were clearly defined as comprising legitimate and original research (Seago & Dunn 1999: 11). The approach to practice was also guided by Goldsmiths, University of London's description of their PhD Art programme, in which the idea of practice is promoted as an integral component of the PhD research and is accompanied by a discursive document that critically engages with and illuminates the practice. Goldsmiths describe all components of the PhD Art (the artwork/s and the dissertation) as "sites of rigorous formal experimentation" (Goldsmiths, University of London 2016). The notion of the creative process and artistic outcome as research is echoed and strongly argued for by G. James Daichendt in his book *Artist Scholar: Reflections on Writing and Research* (2012), in which he defines art production as innately being a process of enquiry, critical cogitation, commentary and discovery. This attitude is reflected in the way the practice-based component of this research project was presented in the initial research proposal and subsequently approached — where the primary source of knowledge and enquiry emerges, and is made visible from practice.

James Elkins's essay "The three configurations of practice-based PhDs" (2005) is a useful guide for describing the parameters of the written component of this study, in particular his first model of practice-based research which states that "the dissertation is research that informs the practice"(2005: 7). In this model he puts forward a number of possible approaches to the written dissertation. One approach defines the dissertation as art criticism and suggests a reflective approach whereby the artist critically reflects on his or her practice (2005: 12), while another suggests that the dissertation is a technical report where advanced techniques are documented in doctorate level dissertations (2005: 13–14). These two propositions for the approach to the dissertation loosely define the parameters for the written component of this particular study, in that it is approached as a reflective study that critically engages with the aesthetic, conceptual and technical processes at work within the film. The textual component is in part a technical report but it also importantly critically reflects on, contextualises, elucidates and locates the study in terms of its particular sources, influences, precedents and conceptual exploration. Elkins is quick to point out that critical reflection in practice-based research in art should not be interpreted as simply a mixture of art theory and art history, but rather as a sound elucidation of one's own artwork that situates it within the critical matrix to which it belongs (2005:12). I find this view of critical reflection most sympathetic to the interdisciplinary nature of my study, which comprises an experimental, animated film that primarily straddles animation and

fine arts but also draws on sources from other visual and non-visual genres, including live film, literature, archival photographic and filmic imagery and found photographic and digital imagery, and digital processes (digital film technology and the digital animation platform). Thus, while it is presented as a creative artwork, the critical reflection is not presented as a theoretical discussion immersed in art history (or the history of animated film), whereby the entirety of the subject area is covered. Rather, the dissertation focuses on sources and precedents that were selected for creative purposes, in terms of their importance to the film, and that critically situate the film aesthetically, conceptually and technically.

There are a number of distinctions that have been articulated and introduced within discourse surrounding research in art. Christopher Frayling identified three permutations in his frequently cited 1994 research paper for the Royal College of Art, titled “Research in Art and Design”. Frayling’s three permutations are “research into art and design”, “research for art and design” and “research through art and design” (1994: 5). Frayling uses the term “research into art and design” to describe a historical study — usually a straightforward dissertation that engages with various theoretical perspectives that illuminate the research question. Such an approach implies that an investigation on art practice is conducted from a theoretical and critical distance. This type of research is arguably the most common in the humanities and embodies an approach shared across disciplines that include music, performance studies, media studies, art history, art and literature (Borgdorff 2007). “Research through art and design” is, according to Frayling, somewhat more complex as there are more variables, but it is still an identifiable category. This approach usually involves a practical project where knowledge, data collection and exploration are communicated through the processes of creative practice. Such research typically requires a studio work project and a report. The report (which can be accompanied by a diary) functions to communicate, reflect on and contextualise the practice-based knowledge. Results can be shown in various ways, depending on the nature of the project, but most often culminate in creative output and a written report. This structure is common to the Masters of Arts programmes of many university art programmes, where the Masters of Arts degree comprises a studio work component, combined with a written component. The PhD is sometimes an extension of this, requiring more substantial studio work and written components (Frayling 1993/4: 5). My PhD study clearly aligns with Frayling’s category of “Research through art and design” in that the

primary knowledge and research is conveyed through creative practice and the study comprises a studio work project and a written report. Frayling's suggestion that the written report can be accompanied by a diary is inherent in my project, except that mine is a visual diary (outlining the initial visual conceptualisation) that is integrated into the written report. Frayling describes his third permutation, "research for art", as the most contentious, as in this case the primary research is the art object and the end product. In Frayling's view the culminating artwork embodies the cognitive process or thought made visible. This, he claims, echoes Picasso's famous comments on art and research, where Picasso disdained the academic notion of research and the emphasis given to the process of documenting the search or "gathering of reference materials" (Frayling 1993/4: 5). For Picasso, it was ultimately the knowledge one has found — as made visual in the artwork — that matters, not the search for knowledge. In a 1923 interview with Marius de Zayas, a caricaturist and art critic, Picasso said:

I can hardly understand the importance given to the word research in connection with modern painting. In my opinion to search means nothing in painting. To find is the thing. [...] Among the several sins that I have been accused of, none is more false than that I have, as the principal objective in my work, the spirit of research. When I paint, my object is to show what I have found and not what I am looking for (de Zayas 1923: 315).

While Picasso put his faith in the conclusive art object and appeared to reject the academic notion of research, at the same time he perceived the idea of a search as a vital, transitory, ongoing process that does not stop with the completion of an artwork. He said: "I never do a painting like a work of art. It is always a search. I am always seeking and there is a logical connection throughout that search. That is why I number them [the works] (Museum Picasso de Barcelona 2016: 156–157)". Writing in 1994, Frayling saw potential in the 'Picasso' approach but strongly advocated the need for further debate and research on this perception of research within the academic environment. He specifically cautioned that because of its expressive, subjective nature, this kind of research requires dispassion and needs to be as "much about autobiography and personal development as communicable knowledge" (1994: 5). Frayling's misgivings around the art object's completely replacing the dissertation as new knowledge are still echoed by Elkins some years later in 2009. Elkins distinguishes between the idea of the art object as embodying

thought and the idea of the art object as enabling thought. One that enables thought, in Elkins's view, goes back to Frayling's idea of "research through art", as it eliminates the need for the art object to stand on its own as the end product and embodiment of knowledge. Elkins does not at all discount the idea of the artwork as comprising and embodying the new knowledge but, like Frayling, suggests that much research needs to be done to define how such knowledge is assessed in the university environment (Elkins 2012: 120).

Daichendt makes a good point in his discussion of the relatively short historical allegiance between the creative arts and universities. He reminds us that while universities are now the standard institutions for training in the creative arts, the original homes for art education up to the late 19th century were the academies — where the need for artists to validate their work as research or to equate their work with or evaluate it against textual research methodologies was never a priority (2012: 29). While Daichendt acknowledges that universities are not the natural homes for the creative arts, he stresses that the universities have largely taken over the responsibility for art training and have introduced creative arts practice into curricula as academic disciplines. Thus, he suggests, the onus is on the universities to address and surmount the uncertain and sometimes conflicting relationship between art practice and research. To Daichendt, the point is not to find ways to make art practice conform to the scientific approach to research which ultimately aims to provoke enquiry to gain new knowledge. Citing the examples of ancient Greek poetry, Michelangelo's turbulent genius and Damien Hirst's animals in formaldehyde, the potential of artistic enquiry to challenge boundaries and to gain new insights, he argues, has been present in art making since antiquity and is just as potent today (2012: 16). In Daichendt's view, the problem lies in the ongoing use of the term "research" to describe artistic practice, and the limited interpretation of the term as it applies specifically to scientific methodological approaches. He proposes that the term "scholarship" is a more appropriate one for all creative practice conducted at the university level. In his view this term is more "inclusive of diverse practices, and addresses issues over measuring and qualifying arts practice as research" (Daichendt 2012: 3). While Daichendt insists that the responsibly to overcome debates on the definition and evaluation of artist practice-as-research lies within the universities, he also posits that artists should simultaneously be able to locate their practice within the context of the university setting. By this he infers that artists should be able to write critically about their work, and stresses the usefulness of

artists' being able to explain their work textually. He also points out that the requisite written component that is predominantly required to accompany practice-based research is not likely to change — but stresses that how the textual component is approached is something that is open to debate (2012: 63).

Practice-based research in the creative arts in South Africa

While institutions within the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, New Zealand and Australia, for example, have established common criteria and programmes around practice-based research, much of the commentary on the subject implies that there still exists a fair amount of uncertainty and debate around what constitutes practice-based research, and how both the theory and practice in such research should be approached, defined, assessed and examined in the university environment at the PhD level (Elkins 2009: xi). This is particularly the case in South Africa. The major universities in South Africa, including Stellenbosch University, Rhodes University, the University of the Witwatersrand and UKZN have long running Masters of Arts programmes (in Fine Arts, Visual Arts, and Drama and Performance Studies) where there is a 50/50 split between practice and theory, and where practice is seen as a major component of the research. However, with the exception of Stellenbosch University, none these institutions formally take practice in the arts to the PhD level (Stellenbosch University 2016). Nonetheless, most allow practice-based research in the arts at the PhD level on a kind of ad hoc basis. At UKZN, for example, practice-based research in the arts appears to be legitimised in terms of individual proposals for projects that have been accepted by the institution but that are not part of an established discipline-specific PhD programme. Other such studies are conducted through other disciplines with an established PhD programme that includes practice as a research component. The University of the Witwatersrand's School of Arts, for example, have a "PhD by Dissertation and Creative Project" in their Theatre and Performance programme, which to my knowledge has allowed staff members from the Digital Arts programme to complete or undergo practice-based PhD research in art (Doherty, 2016, pers. comm., 2 March). Rhodes University, according to its online programme information, offers a PhD by thesis only in the creative and performing arts (Rhodes University, 2016). As a lecturer in Digital Arts at UKZN, I discussed the approach to practice-based PhD research with colleagues from the disciplines of Drama and Performance Studies, and Visual Arts. It appears that each of these disciplines has students conducting practice-based research at

the PhD level, but has no established practice-based PhD programmes. All three disciplines have adopted a 50/50 split between practice and theory, and all colleagues concurred that practice is seen as an integral and major component of the research, and that the written component is a critical contextualisation of the practice. There are some differences in approach to the written component concerning the balance between the methodological report on the practice and critically locating the practice within its particular theoretical contexts. However, these differences do not arise between disciplines, but depend rather on the nature of the individual research projects. While UKZN lags behind institutions abroad, there is a strong drive toward practice-based research within the applied and performing arts at the PhD level and toward getting practice-based research formally recognised within broader institutional structures. However, this drive exists at the discipline level only and there is a general consensus within these disciplines that there is still uncertainty around the legitimacy of such research within the broader institutional structures at UKZN, and that such research needs to be formalised and recognised at these levels (Hall, 2016, pers. comm., 15 April; Hammerschlag, 2016, pers. comm., 21 March; Meskin, 2016, pers. comm., 22 March). Interestingly, the state of practice-based research in the arts in South Africa is highlighted by Dr Veronica Baxter (previously employed in Drama and Performance Studies at UKZN) in her chapter “Practice as research in South Africa “in Robin Nelson’s (2013) *Practice as research in the arts: Principles, protocols, pedagogies, resistances*. While Baxter is writing specifically within the context of performance practice-as-research, she acknowledges that practice-based research in the arts, in general, is fairly new to South Africa and is not adequately recognised and understood by academic institutional structures or by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in South Africa (Baxter 2013: 163).

The uncertainty around practice-based research in art at the PhD level in universities in South Africa extends to the way in which creative research output is understood and defined within government policy. I shall discuss these policies as they are outlined in two government documents. The first is the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training* (DHET 2014), a government document on the transformation of tertiary institutional structure and policy gazetted by the DHET in 2014. The second is a draft document that was submitted by the DHET in February 2016 to South African universities for comments, titled *Draft Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations*

Produced by Public Higher Education Institutions (DHET 2016)². These documents represent the most recent definitions, categories and views on creative research and research outputs by the DHET in South Africa.

The *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training* (DHET 2014) does not mention practice-based research specifically, but does stress the importance of research and innovation, particularly technological innovation — which implies skills-based research, but not necessarily art-based research. The document recognises that policy frameworks on research areas need to be more coherent and that collaboration regarding these frameworks needs to improve “across the research community, which includes universities, research councils and other institutions in the private and public sectors” (DHET, 2014: 34). At the same time, the document acknowledges that the research goals of various universities may need to differ due to the “differentiated university system” (2014: 35). It further stresses the importance of participating in “global research networks” (2013: 35). So while this document does not address the discourse on practice-based research in any significant way, it does imply that the link between research, innovation and applied skills is a factor in research development. It also encourages active participation in the international research community, which one could interpret as actively engaging with developing attitudes toward research in one’s discipline, such as practice-based research. However, these are vague translations in terms of research within the arts and ultimately this document does not engage with this approach to research in any useful way.

The second document, the *Draft Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations Produced by Public Higher Education Institutions*, directly associates the idea of practice-based research and creative research outputs with section 4.4 of the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training*, which emphasises innovation and research (DHET, 2016: 3). The *Draft Policy* shows that the government does recognise the scholarly potential of creative output and research at both Master’s and Doctorate level, and does see them as part of the incentive system whereby scholarly output is financially rewarded. However, it confusingly distinguishes creative output from “textual output (publication) where research is understood in terms of the definition of scientific research

²I attended a meeting on 29 February 2016 to discuss and comments on this draft document. The meeting was chaired by the Acting Dean for the School of Arts at UKZN and was attended by staff in the School of Arts from UKZN's Howard College and Pietermaritzburg campuses.

methodology — as original, systematic investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge and understanding” (DHET, 2016: 4). The document goes on to state that “the other forms of scholarly outputs, specifically those from the creative and performing arts as well as scientific artefacts and patents are excluded from this definition” (DHET 2016: 4).

This disassociation of creative research from scientific research methodology is contrary to much of the discourse on practice-based research, which almost word-for-word defines this type of research in the same way as textual research (which is understood in terms of scientific research methodology). For example, in *Practice-Based Research: A Guide* from the University of Technology in Sydney, Linda Candy defines practice-based research as “original investigation undertaken to gain new knowledge” (Candy 2006: 3). Similarly Henk Borgdorff in his essay *The Debate on Research in the Arts* posits: “Art practice qualifies as research when its purpose is to broaden our knowledge and understanding through an original investigation” (Borgdorff 2007: 14). This understanding of art practice is again echoed by Daichendt who equates the broader understanding of scientific research methodology as a type of investigation that involves critical enquiry, investigation, interpretation, and the eventual acquisition of new knowledge with “something that sounds a lot like art making” (2012: 47). While the South African Department of Higher Education’s *Draft Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations Produced by Public Higher Education Institutions* distinguishes creative research and creative outputs from textual research and textual outputs, it measures and evaluates artistic output and textual output as though they are analogous and subscribe to similar modes of assessment (DHET 2016: 6). In terms of the broader international community, Dieter Lesage (2009: 6), in his article “Who’s afraid of artistic research? On measuring artistic research output”, does not dispute the affinity between the definitions of artistic practice and scientific research, but at the same time stresses that creative practice is not the same as scientific research and cautions against measuring creative output in the same way as scientific research (textual) output. His reservation, he asserts, is partly because scientific research output is measured through citation analysis, which evaluates an article, a journal or an author in terms of how many times the article, journal or author has been cited by others. He posits: “And thus it happens that some people are beginning to dream of an Art Citation Index, while others are talking about the need to classify artistic venues in the same way as academic journals are classified according to their ‘impact factor’” (Lesage 2009: 7). Interestingly, the *Draft Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and*

Innovations Produced by Public Higher Education Institutions does just this, stating in the criteria for the assessment for artistic output: “Exhibition must take place in the public domain such as reputable galleries or museums” (DHET 2016: 29). This criterion is just one of many that display a worrying ignorance of contemporary art practice. What happens in the case of an artwork that is site-specific or that challenges traditional hierarchical notions of display, such as “reputable galleries or museums”, as part of its investigation? What happens in the case of an artwork that aligns itself to the digital platform and new technologies in terms of the way in which it is viewed, accessed and understood, such as net art, where the viewer determines the method and site of display? Lesage goes on to say the tendency to regard all research within the confines of scientific research methodology is already a contentious issue in the humanities and is also commonly viewed as a flawed process even within the scientific community. He goes further to suggest that the broader institutional structures in some universities apply this scientific definition of research (and the citation analysis approach to evaluation) to all types of research precisely to control and restrict forms of research that do not conform. In the case of artistic research, he ventures even further to say that

Others deliberately (mis) understand the obligation for academics to do research as the obligation to do scientific research because they are actually afraid of [...] artistic research. The stubborn rhetorical identification of ‘research’ with ‘scientific research’ allows them to get rid of every form of research within the academy. (Lesage 2009: 5)

I would not go so far as to suggest that attitudes toward creative research in South Africa (at the university and government level) reflect a fear of artistic research, but there is definitely a narrow and limited understanding as to what constitutes creative research, and how such research is understood, carried out, evaluated and presented, as well as a tendency to regard textual research as having more value than artistic research, particularly at the PhD level.

In this context, it is interesting to note what the *Draft Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations Produced by Public Higher Education Institutions* defines and understands as creative output. Firstly, creative disciplines (and outputs) are separated and defined within medium-specific boundaries that no longer exist in the way in which these disciplines are approached, taught and practised. Visual art or fine art, for example, is

defined as “(paintings, sculptures etc.)”, and the criteria for presentation, assessment and evaluation are very specifically confined to traditional, medium-specific art practice and traditional methods of display (DHET 2015: 8). My PhD study straddles fine arts in that (also characteristic of experimental animation) the film uses mixed media, including traditional graphic and painterly processes, and also refers to the aesthetics of traditional fine arts in its visual and conceptual approach. However, it is only the secondary visual output that can be applied in any significant way to the category of fine art and the evaluation of its outputs outlined in this document. This visual output includes imagery created in the pre-production phase of the film and imagery generated at the post-production phase (which has subsequently been exhibited in “reputable art galleries”) — film stills, mixed-media works incorporating animation props and imagery used in the animation process. While this visual output conforms to the criteria and evaluation processes for fine arts, it is of secondary importance to the film, which is the primary research component of the practice. There appears to be no awareness within this document of the non-medium-specific, interdisciplinary nature that characterises and is almost synonymous with contemporary art making. Apart from having an affinity with fine art processes and aesthetics, the creative output for my PhD study comprises an experimental animated film that relies both on digital and traditional film technology in its conception and filmic approach. However, in terms of this government document, the filmic approach does not conform to almost all of the “categories in film and television qualifying for accreditation” (DHET 2016: 13), such as lighting design, acting, cinematography, set design and costume design. My film incorporates fine art processes, digital animation, traditional animation, live film and digital imaging, and has little relation to any of the criteria for the evaluation of films in this document. Furthermore, this category only accepts films of 30 minutes duration or longer, whereas mine is just less than 11 minutes (the standard duration for an animated short film is 10 minutes, due to the labour-intensive nature of the genre). While animation is listed in this section of the document, the categories for accreditation are narrowly confined to mainstream documentary-type film making, with specific reference to the analogue era of film. Even for the analogue era this is very specific and seems to leave out the many other significant approaches to film making that have been present since the beginning of the 20th century. Moreover, there is no mention of digital film or an awareness of the fact that digital film technology has revolutionised the way in which films have been made, conceived and presented since the 1980s. These outdated and narrow categorisations of what comprises

disciplines (such as Fine Arts and Film and Television) in the creative arts and the assessment criteria for evaluation of creative outputs are far removed from how these disciplines are defined, taught and practised.

Lastly, the very important category of new media (and its association with the digital platform) is notable by its absence in this document. New media is a genre within the creative arts that is characterised by its potential to cross disciplinary boundaries, its resistance to medium specificity and its ability to encompass and integrate any number of mediums (Mitchell 2001: 90). This omission is problematic in that the notion of new media is one that has significantly influenced and impacted upon all traditional media and creative practice (including the performing arts, such as music). New media is noted for its resistance to various modes of specificity and thus new media creative output cannot be measured within the confines of the narrow medium-specific criteria for evaluation as outlined in this document. To be fair the *Draft Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations* is a draft document and has been submitted to universities for comments, and thus could be broadened and amended. The document also acknowledges (albeit vaguely) the diversity of the creative arts, and that creative output could extend beyond these categories and criteria. It also gives institutions the relative freedom to establish their own criteria for evaluation in areas within the creative arts that are not represented in this document. However, the document does not elaborate any further than this. On the whole it reflects a longstanding, outdated and narrow perception of what creative research and creative output comprise.

In conclusion, while practice-based research in the arts in South Africa is fairly well-established at the Master's level of study, much still needs to be done to legitimise, acknowledge and understand practice-based research at the PhD level, within the context of the university setting and within the context of government policy. At UKZN, there is consensus at the discipline level that common criteria around practice-based research in the arts need to be formally established and that greater hierarchical support, acknowledgement and understanding are needed within the higher institutional structures. It is important that formal criteria (beyond the discipline level) are recognised and followed through during the submission and examination processes of such studies, especially when practice-based PhD projects are being formally accepted within institutions. While there is clearly still debate around practice-based research globally,

there is much more acceptance of, commentary on and acknowledgement of practice-based research in the arts within university structures and within the broader academic discourse. Temple Hauptfleisch (who writes specifically within the context of performance practice-as-research (PaR) in South Africa, but whose comments cover practice-based research in the arts in general) posits: “The problems confronted by the PaR movement are, of course, far from unique to South Africa, for the core issues have become points of spirited debate internationally, with much being published and a number of initiatives having surfaced in other countries” (Hauptfleisch 2011: 182). As Hauptfleisch points out, international debates and uncertainty over practice-based research continue, but at least discourses have been developed and institutions have for some time been actively engaged in developing programmes and criteria for practice-based research in the creative arts. These international precedents and debates have been vital in establishing the structure and parameters for this PhD study and for communicating these aspects of the study to higher institutional structures within this university.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the study

This PhD study is a practice-based research project. The focus of the study is the production of an experimental animated film titled *Big Man*. This accompanying written analysis considers the conceptual, theoretical, technical and creative approaches used in the making of the film from pre- to post-production.

The film is a retelling of the Old Testament/Hebrew biblical story found in chapters two and four of *The Book of Daniel*, which tells of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar's troubled dreams. The original biblical story is re-interpreted in the film which re-imagines the former South African Prime Minister, Mr Balthazar Johannes (BJ) Vorster, as the character of Nebuchadnezzar. (Vorster replaced the assassinated "architect of apartheid" Dr HF Verwoerd as the Prime Minister of South Africa in 1966 and remained in office until 1978.) The film has elements of black comedy in it that show Vorster having the same disturbing dreams as did the Babylonian king. The film reveals the dreams as he experiences them (as a latter day Nebuchadnezzar) and as they are interpreted by the prophet Daniel. The visual narrative places the events in a South African setting (drawing on historical and imagined events) contemporary to that of Vorster's.

Daniel was one of the children of the Jewish nobility who had been captured by Nebuchadnezzar after he besieged Jerusalem in 605 BCE; Daniel was taken to Babylon where he was educated in Chaldean thought and trained in the king's service (Doukhan 2000). While he never converted to Babylonian ways, he became a significant figure in the Babylonian court due to his gift for dream interpretation, which he experienced and understood through visionary communication with "The God of Heaven" (Daniel 2:18). In the film Daniel is visually represented by Dr Beyers Naudé, who notoriously came into conflict with the Afrikaans Dutch Reformed Church (his own religious denomination) due to his rejection of the Church's support of apartheid. He also resigned from the

Broederbond³after 22 years of membership in 1963 and soon after controversially renounced apartheid from the pulpit as morally wrong and contrary to his religious beliefs (SAHO 2015). Dr Beyers Naudé appears briefly in the film at the end of each dream scene. In the *Banishment* scene his voice is heard on the soundtrack — an excerpt from a documentary film (Bilheimer 1988) in which he explains his public rejection of apartheid and his subsequent alienation from the Afrikaans Dutch Reformed Church and the Broederbond.

The title of this film, *Big Man*, is often associated with the phenomenon of the African dictator and with despotism more generally (Wrong 2000: 4). In the film, the ‘Big Man’ refers variously to Nebuchadnezzar and to BJ Vorster, both of whom have been accused of being despotic figures (Weisberg & Weisberg 2007; Baigrie & Achmat 2013: 21). While South African political leadership, post BJ Vorster, has had some high points, it has also had its fair share of ‘Big Men’. The film significantly concludes with a series of portraits of successive South African heads of state up to our present day president Jacob Zuma, whose growing ‘Big Man’ status is increasingly being highlighted in both local and international media coverage (Johnson 2010; Poplak 2014). The exploration within the film of the notion of the ‘Big Man’ is discussed as it relates to both the phenomenon of the African dictator and to the broader context of the despot. This discussion is extended to include the artistic and literary references to the ‘Big Man’ and ‘Big Man’-like figures that influenced the visual and conceptual approach to the film.

The film combines digital animation processes, traditional and experimental animation processes, digital imagery (photographic, manipulated and hand-drawn), and live footage. A significant aspect of the research was finding ways to explore and extend my knowledge of digital, traditional and experimental methods of animation. The animation process was notably aided by the digital platform in various ways. In those sections of the film where traditional animation is used, the digital platform and digital technology function as supportive rather than creative mechanisms. For example, the use of digital camera technology and stop-motion image capture programs greatly sped up and facilitated the traditional hand-made processes of paper cut-out and paint-on-glass animation. In these cases, the animation itself did not take place within a digital animation program but was created in the traditional hand-manipulated way, and only subsequently processed and

³A partly clandestine organisation “set up to advance the interests of Afrikanerdom” (Wilkins & Strydom 1978: 38).

edited using digital applications. Where I used digital animation, I used dedicated drawing and animating programs to both process and create the animation. I also took advantage of the obvious labour saving potentials offered by these platforms to produce the digitally animated scenes. The digital platform, in addition, enabled me to merge traditional and digital creative approaches both during the creative process and at the post-production stage. This study thus explores, in depth, the various ways in which the film accesses the digital platform — in particular the ways in which I used the digital platform to support and process traditional and experimental animation, to create digital animation, and to integrate traditional and digital methods.

The visual conception of the film was significantly influenced by South African archival photographs, stills from BBC newsreels, contemporary news photographs and live footage. The analysis that follows considers the various ways in which these sources impacted on the visual aspects of the film, including the referenced historical South African events, the portrayal of BJ Vorster and subsequent South African leaders, and the visualisation and presentation of historical and imagined settings within the film. Also of importance to the study are the ways in which the visual conception of the film (to some extent) determined the particular animation approaches I used.

1.2 Re-imagining the biblical narrative

The film is an adaptation of chapters two and four from *The Book of Daniel*. These chapters recount two of King Nebuchadnezzar's visionary dreams. These dreams are interpreted by the prophet Daniel to be prophetic warnings: Nebuchadnezzar will be overthrown, sent to the wilderness and descend into madness if he does not become a merciful ruler. But the king fails to heed these cautionary messages and the prophecy comes true. Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom is taken from him and he is banished into the wilderness, where he descends into madness to live like a wild animal (Daniel 4:25–27). He remains in the wilderness for seven years until he feels remorse and accepts the omnipotent presence of Daniel's God. His kingdom is then restored to him. While the film adaptation is centred on these two chapters, the narrative ends by alluding to the kingdoms and rulers that succeed King Nebuchadnezzar and which are outlined in chapter five in *The Book of Daniel*.

The Book of Daniel, chapter two, sometimes called “The dream of the statue”, tells of Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream. Though the king himself is unable to recall his dream, Daniel is able to reveal its content to him. Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed about an enormous statue with a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, torso and thighs of copper, legs of iron, and feet of mixed iron and clay. In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar witnesses the statue destroyed by a large stone that is cut from a huge mountain. According to Daniel, the statue symbolises four successive Chaldean kingdoms, starting with Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (represented by the gold head) but then declining with each successive ruler. The other three kingdoms are shown by the silver, bronze and iron parts of the statue, but the statue’s feet are made of iron and “miry clay” (Daniel 2:43) and, as a result, the statue is easily destroyed: “Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them” (Daniel 2:35). In Daniel’s interpretation the dream is, in fact, a prophecy: the kingdom of Chaldea will not survive but be overthrown by God’s kingdom, which will last forever. Daniel claims that these events can be averted if Nebuchadnezzar turns away from sin and accepts God (this being the God of the Judaeo-Christian world) (Daniel 2:27).

The second dream is found in chapter four of *The Book of Daniel*. In this instance Nebuchadnezzar is able to tell Daniel how he “saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me” (Daniel 4:5). In it he had seen a tree growing “in the midst of the earth” (Daniel 4:10): it was “strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth. The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it” (Daniel 4:11–12). Then a “watcher and a holy one came down from heaven” (Daniel 4:11–12). At the command of a heavenly voice, the tree is cut down, and its fruit and the beasts that live in its shade scattered. In his dream Nebuchadnezzar also hears these words: “let his heart be changed from a man’s. Let a beast’s heart be given to him” (Daniel 4:16). We know from Daniel’s interpretation of this dream that the voice is referring to Nebuchadnezzar’s own transformation and that the tree is Nebuchadnezzar himself. Daniel’s interpretation warns that unless the King changes his ways, becomes a merciful ruler and accepts God as his master, God will take his kingdom from him and send him into the wilderness where he will lose his mind and live like a wild beast for

seven years until he atones for his sins. Of course, Nebuchadnezzar does not heed this warning and all of this comes to pass.

The narration of the film largely remains faithful to its biblical source although, as already indicated, the story is re-imagined, within a South African historical context. The retelling of the biblical story only starts after the first section of the film, which I have titled *Prologue*. The purpose of this preamble to the biblical narrative is to set the historical time period of the film, and to explain the events leading up to BJ Vorster becoming the Prime Minister of South Africa in 1966. While these initial scenes do not relate directly to the biblical story, they are vital to clarify at the start of the film who BJ Vorster is, how he fits into South African history; and why he is an apt character to fit the role of Nebuchadnezzar. While the general outline of South Africa's apartheid history is widely known, one cannot assume all viewers, even all South African viewers, will be familiar with the events and participants referenced in my film.

The *Prologue* is made up of two scenes. The first scene of the film explores the funeral of Dr HF Verwoerd, the South African Prime Minister who was assassinated by Dimitri Tsafendas on 6 September 1966 and whom BJ Vorster would succeed. The second scene shows an excerpt from BJ Vorster's acceptance speech on the steps of the Union Buildings in Pretoria immediately after his swearing in as the new Prime Minister of South Africa. In contrast to the relative historical accuracy of these scenes, the subsequent narrative of the film is entirely fictional, following the biblical story of Nebuchadnezzar rather than the course of BJ Vorster's own tenure as Prime Minister. This part of the film is made up of three scenes, titled *The dream of the statue*, *The dream of the tree* and *Banishment*. Although the narrative follows the biblical stories, it is set in Groote Schuur and its surrounding estate. In this way I am able to use imagery that relocates the biblical story within a mostly imagined South African setting, although in *The dream of the statue* scene, the imagery and narrative portray the actual event of the removal of BJ Vorster's statue and include footage of the destroyed statue. However, these references to Vorster's statue are integrated within a dreamscape and are adapted to the biblical story.

In these scenes that follow the *Prologue*, the visual narrative reveals the dreams that BJ Vorster experiences while living in the house at Groote Schuur. The dreams, while particular to BJ Vorster's own visual context, are based on the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar and are on the whole faithful to the biblical text. Like Nebuchadnezzar, BJ Vorster is

troubled by two disturbing dreams, which loosely follow those in the biblical stories. In the first dream scene, *The dream of the statue*, BJ Vorster witnesses the removal and destruction of his own statue. In the second dream scene, *The dream of the tree*, he sees a great tree that loses its leaves and withers and dies before his eyes. Following the biblical text [“Let a beast’s heart be given to him” (Daniel 4:16)] this dream also sees BJ Vorster transformed into a baboon, an iconic South African “beast”. As with the biblical story, the dreams are intended to be prophecies showing what will befall him if he does not heed the warnings contained in the dreams: if he fails to change his ways he (and we might say the regime that he represents) will lose his power and be banished into the wilderness where he will live and become like a wild beast until he atones for his sins.

Of course BJ Vorster (as Nebuchadnezzar) does not pay heed to the warnings and after a time Daniel’s prophetic warnings come true. The *Banishment* scene that follows the dreams shows him leaving Groote Schuur, and struggling aimlessly through the landscape in and around Groote Schuur Estate while becoming increasingly dishevelled and debased. Finally, he ends up naked, on all fours, outside the Rhodes Memorial which is situated above Groote Schuur Estate and at the foot of Devil’s Peak. In the film this is the place where he takes on a beastly form. The Rhodes Memorial is an ideal place for BJ Vorster to end up, because Cecil John Rhodes, to whom the memorial is dedicated, is historically regarded as the archetypal colonizer of Africa and as having despotic aspirations (Millin 1926: 53). Also, BJ Vorster’s beastly state is apt for this setting because the classically inspired architectural memorial includes eight enormous bronze lions along with its dramatic equestrian statue of a rearing horse and rider.

The film concludes with the *Epilogue* scene where the narrative is brought into the present. After BJ Vorster is briefly shown restored to his former human self, we are given portraits of all the subsequent South African prime ministers and presidents to date. They are there to represent BJ Vorster’s legacy. As is the case in Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream, the suggestion is that not all his successors will prosper: the cycle of sin continues, and lessons are not learnt.

1.3 'Big Man' and the traditions of Western art and animation

The film was made with a consciousness of the historical traditions of animation and the various discourses associated with the dominant forms and categorisations of animation. These are most simply represented by Disney's hyper-realist tradition, on the one hand, and by the various linear and non-linear approaches associated with experimental animation on the other (Moritz 1997: 223; Wells 2002: 36). I am also aware of more recent debates concerning the re-definition or re-imagining of animation (and its categorisations) in the context of the digital era (Wells & Hardstaff 2008: 5). The approach to making the film, on the whole, allies itself with experimental animation in its approach to subject matter and process. While the field of experimental animation is traditionally associated with 'non-linear, non-objective, abstract work' (and this film is neither non-linear nor abstract), the definition of experimental animation, particularly in more recent debates, can include all manner of creative expression concerning the moving image. Indeed, Wells and Hardstaff (2008) acknowledge that an all-embracing approach has always been present in experimental animation (in Norman McLaren's innovative body of work, for example), but they argue that the digital platform has brought these characteristics of the genre to the fore because the digital revolution has provided a platform with seemingly endless creative potential (Wells & Hardstaff 2008: 7, 15).

In terms of traditional animation, the animating process within the film was facilitated by Walt Disney's 'twelve principles of animation'. These are the principles developed by the Disney animators Frank Thomas, Ollie Johnston, Fred Moore, Ward Kimball and Milt Kahl to create believable, animated movement. *The animator's survival kit* by Richard Williams (2001) and *The illusion of life* by Ollie Johnston and Frank Thomas (1981) were extremely useful texts that provided me with detailed explanations of Disney's twelve principles of animation, including equally detailed diagrammatic and illustrative examples (Johnston & Thomas 1981; Williams 2001). The Disney Studio's principles of animation remain invaluable to mastering animated movement and can be applied to various forms of animation techniques and styles, including 3D animation (Lasseter 1987).

Within the context of the alternative Western (European and American) traditions of animation, the techniques used in *Big Man* are informed by the ideas and films of individual animators and filmmakers. The various paper cut-out animation approaches and visual aspects of the paper cut-out scenes draw on the films and processes of the Russian

animator Yuri Norstein and the German animators Lotte Reiniger and Berthold Bartosch. The paint-on-glass technique was informed by the work of the American animator Caroline Leaf.

The film also draws strongly on the works and ideas of particular artists within the traditions of Western art. These sources impacted on the visual and conceptual content of particular scenes. For example, the figure of BJ Vorster (in the role of Nebuchadnezzar when he is in the wilderness and has descended into madness) refers to particular works by the British artist and poet William Blake (1757–1827) and the British painter Francis Bacon (1909–1992). The enigmatic portraits of powerful figures painted by the 16th century Spanish artist Diego Velasquez (1599–1660) were important to the visual and conceptual exploration of the ‘Big Man’ theme within the film.

1.4 The ‘Big Man’ and the traditions of South African art and animation

The subject matter of the film, its South African historical context and its exploration of a corrupt, powerful, individual, has precedent in a number of South African artists’ work, including William Kentridge (1955–), Robert Hodgins (1920–2010), Brett Murray (1961–), Ayanda Mabulu (1981–) and Jonathan Shapiro (1958–). While the film does not specifically refer to the work of these artists (in the way that it engages with that of Bacon and Blake), it is made with an acute awareness of the oeuvre of these artists. Much of Kentridge’s work explores South Africa’s apartheid history and the associated injustices. The ‘Big Man’ of many of Kentridge’s films is Soho Eckstein, a corpulent, suited property magnate. Philippe Moins describes Soho Eckstein as

a fat person; some kind of real-estate magnate. With his striped suits and pudgy features, you would place him somewhere between Bolshevik caricatures of capitalists and the expressionist images of the Weimar Republic. (Moins 1998: np)

Another manifestation of a ‘Big Man’ character in Kentridge’s works is the tyrannical Ubu, a character Kentridge created that is based the protagonist of French Symbolist Alfred Jarry’s 1896 play, *Ubu Roi* (about a school teacher turned despotic king). Kentridge’s Ubu features prominently in animations such as *Ubu Tells the Truth* (1997) and exhibits the same absurd and tyrannical characteristics of Jarry’s character. The ‘Big

Man' theme continues to dominate Kentridge's work, one of the most recent manifestations evident in Kentridge's 2010 multimedia production of *The Nose*, based on Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich's opera of the same name (1927–28). Shostakovich's opera was in turn an interpretation of Nikolai Gogol's absurdist short story of the same name. Gogol's story satirises the Tzarist Russia of the 1830's, characterised by a despotic reign of terror and absurd bureaucracy, and similarly Kentridge's is set simultaneously during the 1917 Russian Revolution, a time of tremendous social political upheaval, and Stalin's later tyrannical regime.

Robert Hodgins, whom Kendell Geers argues is South Africa's most important artist in spite of his relative obscurity (2002: 64), and whose Ubu-inspired imagery has been a significant influence on Kentridge, has possibly made some of the most potent 'Big Man' imagery. Hodgins's work is significant in that he visually explores this idea both in terms of the African dictator and in terms of the broader understanding of the powerful tyrant (Becker 2002: 37). Unlike Kentridge's Ubu character, who is visually close to Jarry's original woodcuts and whose antics embrace those of the archetypal 'Big Man', Hodgins's Ubu seldom resembles Jarry's and represents a range of characters. These include, for example, a member of the South African Security Branch in *Ubu Interrogator 1* (1983), a Hermann Goering-type figure in *Ubu and the Black Politician* (1983), an African dictator in *No. 6 Central Africa? East Africa? 1960* (1981/2), an anti-Semitic Weimar Republic-era judge in *No.1 France: The Dreyfus Affair – 1893* (1996), and a corrupt banker in *No 3. Berlin – Inflation – 1923* (1996). Other works simply deal with the archetypal 'Big Man'/tyrant such as *The Tyrant in his Shirt Sleeves* (1993) and *A Wicked Man Sumptuously Attired* (1996).

While Kentridge's and Hodgins's explorations of the 'Big Man' clearly and provocatively draw on South Africa's apartheid history and post-apartheid present, their work has not engendered the same public and political outrage as the work of artists such as Brett Murray, Ayanda Mabulu and Jonathan Shapiro. All three of these artists have come under fire from the ruling African National Congress (ANC) for their critical portrayals of President Jacob Zuma as a corrupt, philandering, nepotistic and despotic leader. Murray's 2012 *The Spear* and Mabulu's *Spear Down my Throat (The Pornography of Power)* (2015), among others, have caused a widespread political and public outcry, and have elicited threats of legal action from the ANC for their portrayals of Zuma with his genitals

exposed. Shapiro subsequently caused equal controversy when he published cartoons made in defence and support of the work of both Murray and Mabulu. Unlike Mabulu and Murray, however, Shapiro has been producing controversial images of Zuma since 2006 — a few years before he became the President of South Africa in 2009. Shapiro has in fact been sued by Zuma and the ANC over images such as those made of Zuma during his rape trial in 2006, where he attached a shower head to Zuma's head (in response to Zuma's statement that he took a shower after having sex with his HIV-positive accuser to prevent contracting HIV/AIDS), and over Shapiro's Lady Justice rape cartoon (2010), where Zuma is shown about to rape the personification of justice. According to Shapiro, the ANC's (and Zuma's) aggressive responses to his work and that of Murray and Mabulu, and subsequent active attempts to shut down their freedom of expression, are unprecedented (even during apartheid) and are a sinister evocation of 'Big Man' rule (News24 2015).

1.5 Chapter outline

Chapter One has consisted of an introduction to and overview of the practice-led research project. This chapter has aimed to clarify the practice-led nature of the research, and has outlined the theoretical, conceptual, technical and visual focus of the study.

Chapter Two introduces the reader to the film by detailing the various visual explorations and storyboarding processes that were conducted in the pre-production stage. This section discusses the initial drawings created to outline the broad visual narrative and planned stylistic approach to the film. These initial sequences explore the adaptation of the biblical story to the historical and imagined South African narrative. The chapter also documents the planning of the drawings and images made for various scenes after the initial storyboard phase. These include digital drawings, photographic imagery and pencil sketches that serve to further clarify the visual narrative as well as the direction and planning of the animated movement. Finally, this section will discuss the images that were created for exhibition, and also explore the subject matter and visual approach to the film.

Chapter Three reflects on the concept of the 'Big Man' in terms of its relation to the phenomenon of the African dictator and to the broader idea of the despot. This section discusses the literary references that impacted most significantly on my exploration of this

concept. The most notable—of these are as follows: Riccardo Orizio's *Talk of the devil: Encounters with seven dictators* (2003), which documents conversations with fallen despots: Idi Amin, Jean-Bédél Bokassa, Haile Mariam Mengistu, Enver Halil Hoxha, Jean-Claude Duvalier, Slobodan Milosevic and Wojciech Witold Jaruzelski; Giles Foden's *The Last King of Scotland* (1998), a fictional portrait of Idi Amin; and Michela Wrong's *In the Footsteps of Mr Kurtz* (2000), an account of the dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko. Of particular interest to me is the fact that these texts deal not only with despotism in general, but also with the phenomenon of the African dictator. This section also deals with the ways in which the visual exploration of the 'Big Man' theme of the film was influenced by images in Western art history. In particular, the film drew on those images that critically and visually explore images in Western art history of powerful individuals — notably selected works of the 18th-century artist William Blake and the 20th-century artist Francis Bacon. This chapter locates the study within the context of the work of South African artists Kentridge, Hodgins, Mabulu, Murray and Shapiro (Zapiro), in particular as it explores the notion of the 'Big Man' as it relates to the archetypal evil tyrant, its reinvention as the African dictator, and the present South African leadership under Jacob Zuma. This section briefly compares the concept of the 'Big Man' and Thomas Carlyle's well-known theory of the 'Great Man', which he presents in *On heroes, hero-worship and the heroic in history* (Carlyle 2012[1841]). While these two concepts are not the same, there are some fundamental similarities that need to be pointed out.

Chapter Four considers the experimental stop-motion, paper cut-out and paint-on-glass animation processes used in the film. The technical procedures of these processes are explained and briefly contextualised in terms of the animators and historical genres that inspired me to use them. The study also examines the ways in which these hand-made and hand-manipulated traditions utilise digital technology and digital applications to facilitate aspects of the various processes. This chapter further considers how the visual and conceptual approaches of the paper cut-out and paint-on-glass scenes incorporate and access archival imagery and live footage. As with the paper cut-out technique, the paint-on-glass process was partly born out of a frustration with the inability of the digital platform to imitate successfully the expressive qualities of traditional painting and drawing media. This chapter engages with these issues as they relate to contemporary debates relating to animation, traditional artistic media and digital technology.

Chapter Five details the digital imaging and animation processes used in the film. Aside from the significant role digital film technology played in the post-production phase of the film, the film also used the digital platform during the production stage in a number of ways: to create and animate digital puppets, to create frame-by-frame hand-drawn digital animation, and to create manipulated and drawn imagery. This chapter discusses in detail the digital applications I used for each animated process and the specific technical and visual approaches I adopted. Here I also consider how these approaches access traditional animation techniques and traditional animation genres. This chapter goes on to discuss the creation and conception of the digitally manipulated photographic, filmed and drawn digital imagery within these digitally animated segments of the film, as well as the historical and narrative importance of this imagery. This chapter also briefly acknowledges contemporary debates and issues around digital animation and traditional, hand-made animation.

Chapter Six concludes the study by reflecting on the following: the status of *Big Man* as both an independent animated short film and an art project; the impact of digital technology on the film and on the genre of experimental, independent animation as a whole; the relevance of the research project to the disciplinary field of animation and its contribution to academic research within this field; and finally, the significance of the film to the contemporary South African context.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUALISING THE VISUAL COMPONENT OF THE PROJECT

2.1 A brief overview

This chapter presents and explains the visual content that made up the storyboards and other pre-production preparation. The visual planning approach I used drew loosely on traditional storyboarding techniques. The initial storyboarding process outlined the broad visual and conceptual narrative. Thereafter, planning differed according to the particular animation approach adopted for each scene or segment of the film. Some sections required more pre-planning than others, depending on the animation process. In the traditional cut-out animation scenes, all puppet movement is made by hand and thus fairly extensive pre-production planning was required to work out the nature and direction of movement before animating. The advantage of the digital animation platform is that with digital puppets one can make adjustments and refinements during and after the animation process without having to extensively re-animate, so for these sections I mostly planned the key frames and worked out the movement as I animated. In other sections, such as the paint-on-glass portrait scene and the scene of BJ Vorster in the wilderness, no storyboard preparation was done as I decided to use the ‘straight-ahead’ animation approach in these scenes. With straight-ahead animation one moves from pose to pose without any pre-planning (Williams 2001: 61). Conceptualising the film before production also included the creation of detailed drawings and digital prints. While some of these images were created for exhibition, they also contributed significantly to my exploration of the visual content and stylistic approach to the film.

2.2 The initial visual narrative

Figures 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 show the initial storyboard drawings. These are a series of key drawings that explore the biblical narrative of the film and its adaptation to the South African context. These drawings re-imagine Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the statue and his

subsequent banishment into the wilderness as BJ Vorster's life and political trajectory. While extra scenes were later included to add depth to the biblical and South African context of the film, the broad narrative remains the same. At this early stage of the storyboarding, the conception of a prologue (Dr HF Verwoerd's funeral and Vorster's rise to power) to the biblical narrative had not yet arisen. Neither had I conceived of the epilogue (showing the heads of state of South Africa from Vorster to Jacob Zuma).

While the initial storyboard images do include the exploration of integrated photographic imagery and silhouette animation (see Fig. 2.3), they are dominated by a unified, graphic, hand-drawn, frame-by-frame approach. While I did attempt to retain a stylistic cohesion throughout the film, it became evident during the animation process that other approaches were visually and conceptually more apt for particular scenes — in particular the stop-motion paper cut-out animation, paint-on-glass animation and the integration of live footage.

The challenge at this early stage of the storyboarding process was to re-imagine the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar as Vorster's dreams. To make these dreams believable, it was necessary to research and include facts relating to Vorster's life and time in office which could then be integrated into the visual content. As seen in key frames in Fig. 2.1, the initial storyboard portrayed the film as beginning with Vorster in Groote Schuur, in bed, experiencing a dream of a statue. We know from the biblical story that Nebuchadnezzar dreams of and witnesses the destruction of an enormous statue (Daniel 2:32–33). The prophet Daniel interprets the dream thus: that the statue — with a head of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its stomach and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron and its feet a mixture of iron and clay — represents four kingdoms, beginning with that of Nebuchadnezzar, which is represented by the golden head. He predicts that each kingdom will be inferior to the one before. The final kingdom of clay and iron represents a weak and divided kingdom that signals the destruction all earthly kingdoms; these, Daniel predicts, will be replaced by a kingdom of God “that can never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44).

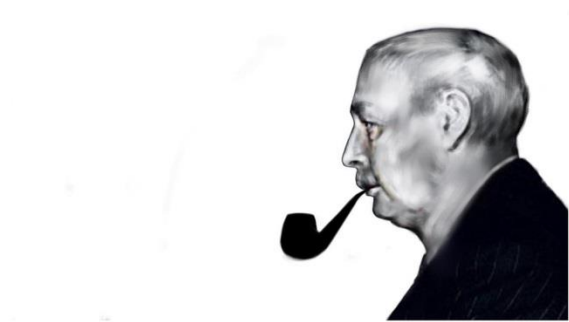


Figure 2.1 Stewart, M. 2012. Initial Visual Storyboard A [digital drawing]

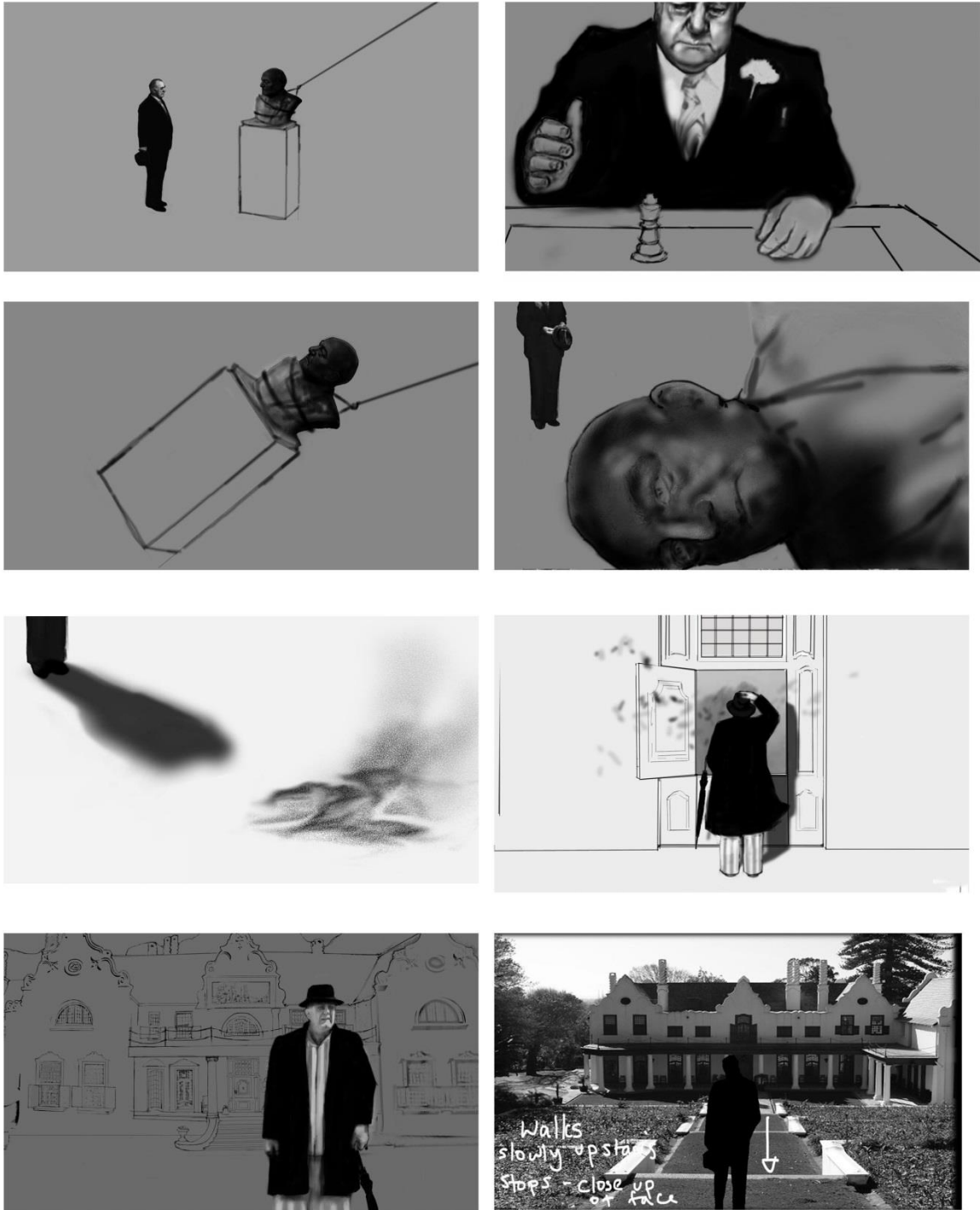


Figure 2.2 Stewart, M. 2012. Initial Visual Storyboard B [digital drawing]



Figure 2.3 Stewart, M. 2012. Initial Visual Storyboard C [digital drawing, pen and ink on paper]

In the re-imagining of this dream as Vorster's, I have adapted the biblical version of the story to reflect his context. Therefore, in Vorster's dream he stands before his own statue, a bust that stood in the foyer of John Vorster Square police station during and after his tenure

as Prime Minister of South Africa. In the dream, Vorster witnesses the actual event of the removal the bust from the foyer of John Vorster Square. In reality, this scene is implausible as the bust was removed in September 1997 (see Fig. 2.4) (SAHA 2014), sometime after his death.

John Vorster Square, the central police station in Johannesburg, was dedicated to Vorster and was opened by him in 1968. The South African History Archive website (2014) states:

It was perhaps fitting that the building was named after Vorster — as the former Minister of Justice, he had overseen the institution of harsh security laws designed to crush opposition to Apartheid and ensured that the Security Branch of the South African Police (SAP) acquired formidable powers. John Vorster Square soon earned a reputation as a site for brutality and torture, becoming the primary location for detentions and interrogations [...] during the 1970's and the 1980's. Between 1970 and 1980, eight people, all of whom were being held under detention regulations, died as a result of having been detained at John Vorster Square. (SAHA 2014)

In this scene, after witnessing his own statue's removal, the following shot reveals (in live footage, through Vorster's eye view) the ruined statue in the grounds of the South African Police Museum in Pretoria. The early storyboard images refer to this event, but in the film the event of the statue's removal and later neglect is more explicitly emphasised, as is the setting of John Vorster Square. At the early planning stage, this was to be the only dream Vorster had and, as shown in these storyboard images, was conceived of as a chess game with the former Prime Minister of Britain, Harold Macmillan. This idea is further articulated in the planning drawings in Fig. 2.5.



Figure 2.4 Big Man goes Bust. 1997 [digital image] [Online] Available: <http://heritage.thetimes.co.za/> BJ Vorster (Accessed 1.09.2014)



Figure 2.5 Stewart, M. 2012. Storyboard Sketches: The dream of the statue [pencil on paper]

The reason for introducing the chess game was because Vorster was an avid chess player (D'Oliveira 1977: 245) and thus this would be a plausible activity for him to be engaged in. Macmillan's presence in these storyboard images is due to the famous "wind of change" speech he delivered in 1960, where he criticised South Africa's apartheid policies and called on the South African leadership to change its political stance (SAHA 2014). The pipe-smoking Macmillan seen in Fig. 2.1 was later articulated as an animated clip, but this was omitted from the final film. Macmillan, with his prophetic 'wind of change' speech, was intended to obliquely refer to the figure of Daniel, with his prophecy related to Nebuchadnezzar. (Much later on during the making of the film I decided to replace Macmillan as a Daniel-type figure with Dr Beyers Naudé, whom I felt was a more apt character to fill these shoes). The image of Macmillan wearing a leopard skin comes from actual archival photographs. The skin was presented to him at his installation as honorary paramount chief at Pietersburg, in the then Northern Transvaal (Kennedy 2011: 20). While I found the absurdity of this imagery fitting for the dreamscape in this scene, it proved too difficult to integrate stylistically and narratively into the film. Nonetheless, the shots of Vorster playing chess are included later in the film to situate him in the house at Groote Schuur. The 'wind of change' concept is obliquely retained in the film in the following ways: it is metaphorically evoked by the windy landscape Vorster confronts when he is banished into the wilderness, and segments of the audio recording of Macmillan's speech appear in the soundtrack of the film. In the *Dream of the statue* scene in the film, instead of the chess scene, Vorster is shown against a ground plan of John Vorster Square, standing before the bust of himself. The dream ends with edited footage of the destroyed bust, – which, following the biblical narrative, foreshadows his downfall.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree (Daniel 4:10), and its re-interpretation as Vorster's dream, does not appear in this early planning stage. The idea of including this dream only emerged once the animation of the dream of the statue was near completion. The adaptation of the biblical version shows Vorster standing before an acacia tree on the hills above the house at Groote Schuur. Acacia trees, pines and oaks were already on the slopes above Groote Schuur when Rhodes bought the house and estate in 1893 (Simons 2002: 40). I chose to have Vorster stand before an Umbrella Thorn acacia tree, a hardy African thorn tree that typifies the African landscape and also has links to the Old Testament. According to Christopher Lloyd (2009), it was an Umbrella Thorn acacia tree that was the

burning bush that burnt into flames before Moses as a sign from God and that provided the wood for the Ark of the Covenant.

The *Dream of the tree* scene was not storyboarded but was created directly within the Adobe Flash animation application. This is a very simple scene that takes place within one shot, so only one key frame was needed in terms of setting the scene. Moreover, the biblical text of Daniel's dream interpretation is so visually descriptive that I was able to use it as the main source for the visual story and animation:

My lord, the tree that you saw, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and its sight to all the earth. It is you, O king, that have grown and become strong: for your greatness has grown, and reached unto heaven, and your dominion to the end of the earth. And since the king saw a watcher and a holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew down the tree, and cut off its branches, shake off its leaves, let it wither and die. Let his heart become a beast's heart, let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which has come upon my lord the king. (Daniel: 4:20)

As seen in Fig. 2.3, even though the imagery changes and scenes are added and expanded in the film, the narrative remains faithful to these original storyboard ideas that show Vorster at home in the house at Groote Schuur, with his coat and hat at the front door, outside the house, and finally in the 'wilderness' of the Groote Schuur Estate where, in Blakean fashion, he ends up naked and on all fours. In the final film the altered imagery and new scenes are either expansions of the original story of Nebuchadnezzar or have been added to clarify the narrative and to inform the South African historical context. These scenes were initially all planned as silhouette animation. In the final film though, some of these wilderness scenes were re-conceived as paint-on-glass animation.

With the planning of the digitally animated scenes, mapping out the movement required less detail, and involved just the creation of the key frames. These scenes did not need to be storyboarded in the same detail as the cut-out animated scenes. When using tweened movement, such as that used with the animation of digital puppets in Adobe Flash for example, one can continually refine movement by adjusting the key frames. With traditional animation one generally needs to re-animate to correct movement.

The paint-on-glass process was also not storyboarded. These scenes, notably the portraits of South African heads of state, involved ‘straight-ahead’ animation (Williams 2001: 61). In *The animator’s survival kit* (2001), Richard Williams states that the advantage of this approach is that it is “fluid”, “spontaneous” and can “produce surprises” (Williams 2001: 61). With the paint-on-glass animation, I knew I was going to go from portrait to portrait and knew what gestures I wanted to include, but did not pre-plan any movement. I wanted these portraits to look like moving paintings that combined recording the painterly process (the building up and breaking down of form) with the creation of movement. This process was most heavily influenced by Caroline Leaf’s paint-on-glass process but is also reminiscent of Tanya Poole’s moving oil paintings.

2.3 Storyboarding Dr HF Verwoerd’s funeral, ‘Prologue’ scene

Dr HF Verwoerd’s funeral was conceived and storyboarded during the production phase, after the animation of the dream of the statue. As all the movement of the paper cut-out scenes of the *Prologue* was hand-manipulated, the storyboarding integrated the nature and direction of the movement within the planning.

The storyboard images comprised of thumbnail sketch sequences outlining the key shots and the nature and direction of the movement of each shot. As with the initial storyboard images of the broad narrative (see Fig. 2.12.3), the final animated scene of Verwoerd’s funeral deviated from these original sketches in that shots and key frames were added, omitted or changed. Nonetheless, the general visual narrative remained the same. This paper cut-out scene involved ‘pose-to-pose’ animation. Richard Williams describes pose-to-pose animation as the ‘planned way’ of animating: “First we decide what are the most important drawings— the storytelling drawings, the keys [...] and any other important poses. Then we work out how to go from one pose to another” (Williams 2001: 62).

Thus, aside from the thumbnail sketches, the planning also involved creating detailed logs that mapped out the movement (its character, timing and direction) for each puppet, frame-by-frame (Williams 2001: 62). All the movement in this scene involved walking —on the part of the mourners, the pallbearers and the dog. The only way I could plan and keep track of the movement of each walk (with the exception of the pallbearers) was to keep a

detailed frame-by-frame log of the walk cycles for each puppet. The pallbearers were walking in unison and thus were each at the same point of the walk cycle for each frame) or at the same pace or with the same stance. In this case, I only needed one cycle of motion to present the group of pallbearers (indicated by the letters ‘PB’ in Fig. 2.6). However, I did add differences in posture and head movement to avoid their motion appearing too similar.

	1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	27	29	31	33	35	37	
TAKE 7																				
DE																				
PB	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	
BETSY	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
DAUGHTER	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
WOMAN	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	
DF	39	41	43	45	47	49	51	53	55	57	59	61	63	65	67	69	71	73	75	
PB	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	
BETSY	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	
DAUGHTER	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
WOMAN	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	
DF	77	79	81	83	85	87	89	91	93	95	97	99	101	103	105	107	109	111	113	
PB	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
BETSY	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
DAUGHTER	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	
WOMAN	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

Figure 2.6 Stewart, M. 2013. Log showing walk cycle plotting for Betsie Verwoerd, two family members and pallbearers: Prologue scene (Big Man) [pencil on paper]

Fig. 2.6 shows the plotting of the walk cycles for three figures (Betsie Verwoerd and family members) and the pallbearers. The actual frames of the animation are highlighted in yellow. I was animating in ‘twos’, hence this is reflected in the numbering of the frames. The walk cycle for each puppet is shown in sequences of thirteen frames. So the numbering of the animation frames associated with each puppet refers to the particular stage of the walk cycle the puppet is at in a particular frame.

2.4 Exhibition works

Aside from the storyboard preparation, the PhD research includes drawings and prints created for exhibition purposes. I used the exhibition platform to create detailed imagery that explored the ideas and stylistic approaches that could inform and influence the imagery and content of the film. Most of these were created during the pre-production stage and were integral to the visual planning.

State Funeral (2009) (see Fig. 2.7) was the earliest of these images and contains the first visual exploration of Verwoerd's funeral procession. In this image the car, the crowd, the coffin and the military presence are all there. The paper cut-out puppets used in the animated scene of Verwoerd's funeral were informed by the simplified figures of this print and their near-silhouetted forms. This was also the first image to portray a crowd scene using manipulated photographic stills taken from BBC archival footage of Verwoerd's funeral.

The crowd in the animation scene of Verwoerd's funeral was adapted directly from *The aftermath of an assassination; street scene from the state funeral* (2010) (see Fig. 2.8). The crowd is the main subject in this image, whereas in the film the crowd forms the backdrop for the funeral procession. Unlike the portrayal of the faceless mass in *State Funeral* (2009), facial features are evident on the people in this crowd. While the actual identities of these people are unknown, each person has been sourced from various stills from BBC footage from Verwoerd's funeral. I found the stills of the crowd a fascinating reflection of the time period and in particular of conservative white society in South Africa in 1966. The reverent stoicism of the crowd echoes the austerity and enormity of the event — a quality I tried to capture in the drawing. In the film, I kept this drawing as a still against which the police dog is animated walking fast and straining on a lead. As with the exhibition drawing, I retained the notion of a snapshot or frozen moment of the crowd as they wait for Verwoerd's coffin to pass by.

The aftermath of an assassination (2011) (see Fig. 2.9) was also created before the animation of the *Prologue* scene and refers to the event of Verwoerd's funeral and burial in the image of the South African flag raised at half-mast and the Heroes' Acre cemetery where he was buried. The image of Heroes' Acre is the same as that featured in the film.

The image of the steps of the Union Buildings in Pretoria and the microphones were also both used in the film, in the cut-out scene of Vorster's speech.

The triptych *Out of Time; A Pierneef landscape revisited* (2010) (see Fig. 2.10) influenced the conception of Vorster as a silhouetted form in *The dream of the trees* scene and later when he is in the 'wilderness' of Groote Schuur Estate. While the subject matter does not relate directly to that of the film, its imaginary portrayal of the noted Afrikaans painter, Pierneef, confronting both his own painting *Untitled* (1951) and the transformation of the South African landscape, echoes the historical and imagined approach to the subject matter of the film. The middle image is faithful to Pierneef's rendition of the South African landscape in *Untitled* (1951), while the first and last images re-imagine the same landscape prior to and after its conception. The first image refers to 'die groot rinderpest', a cattle epidemic that affected extensive areas of South Africa and caused the death of more than two million cattle. It was first encountered in South Africa in 1896 and lasted until 1904 (Spinage 2003: 425). The last image shows the contemporary South African landscape altered, fenced and claimed.

The images titled: *BJ Vorster in bed* (Fig.2.11), *Telefunken* (Fig. 2.12), *Umbrella, hooks, hat* (Fig. 2.13), *Radio* (Fig. 2.14), *PJ's, hat, umbrella and coat* (Fig. 2.15), *A morning constitutional* (Fig. 2.16), and *Golf clubs* (Fig. 2.17) (all 2010) were created as a narrative sequence and directly refer to the subject matter of the film. They are an extension of the initial storyboard and explore the idea of Vorster waking up and leaving the building at Groote Schuur. While Vorster's role as Nebuchadnezzar is not clarified in these images, they were created with the idea of him in this role. These images importantly explored and informed aspects of the visual style adopted for the scene in Groote Schuur where Vorster wakes up, dons his hat and coat, and leaves Groote Schuur. The image *Umbrella, hooks, hat* for example, is replicated in the film, while all of the other images (bar *Radio* and *Golf clubs*) appear in some form (albeit altered) within the film. The inclusion of the radio in this image sequence refers to Vorster's preference for the medium as well as his National Party's unwillingness to introduce television to South Africa for fear of the influence (on the South African public) of international media and opinion. When Vorster did introduce television to South Africa in 1976 it was as a highly censored medium of propaganda (Harrison & Ekman 1976: 102). The image of the Telefunken television (a typical brand and style of television of the time) appears in the film at the start of *The Dream of the tree*.

I explored the image of the golf clubs, with the intention of including them in the film as a reference to Vorster's fondness for playing golf. I toyed with the idea of having Vorster hauling his golf bag and clubs into the wilderness, but decided to have him holding an umbrella instead.

While the various planning images importantly explored the broader visual and conceptual narrative processes, the exhibition works were significant for investigating the nuanced historical and narrative complexities of the subject matter. As discussed, some of these works found their way directly into the film while others informed and influenced my visual approach. Overall, the visual planning for the film was an in-depth process that involved various approaches and levels of engagement with visual material. As a body of accumulative work, this collection of visual preparation is an important record of research conducted for the film.



Figure 2.7 Stewart, M. 2009. State Funeral [digital drawing]



Figure 2.8 Stewart, M. 2010. The aftermath of an assassination; street scene from the state funeral [digital drawing] (The KZN Jabulisa Exhibition, Tatham Art Gallery Pietermaritzburg)



Figure 2.9 Stewart, M. 2010. The aftermath of an assassination; back room machinations [digital drawing] (Staff exhibition, Unisa Art Gallery, Johannesburg)

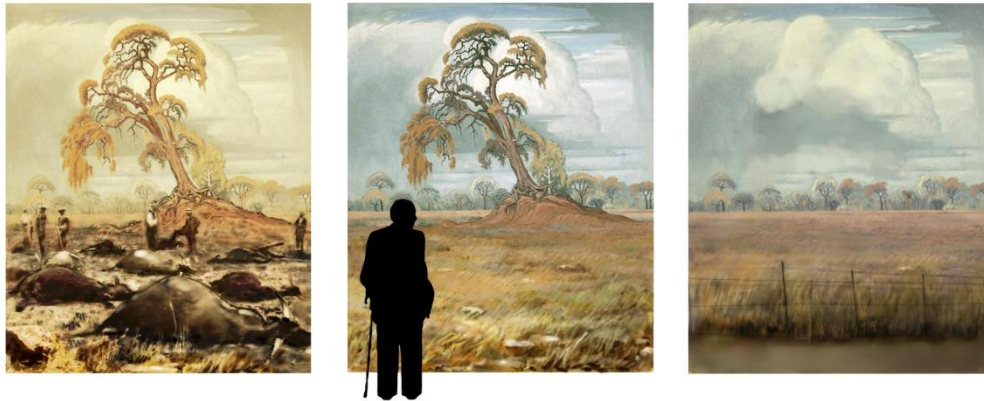


Figure 2.10 Stewart, M. 2010. **Out of time; a Pierneef landscape revisited** [digital drawing] (UKZN Alumni Exhibition: St Paul's School Art Gallery, London)



Figure 2.11 Stewart, M. 2010. **BJ Vorster in bed** [digital drawing] (Centre for Visual Art, Staff Exhibition, Carnegie Art Gallery, Kimberley)



Figure 2.12 Stewart, M. 2010. Telefunken [digital drawing] (Centre for Visual Art, Staff Exhibition, Carnegie Art Gallery, Kimberley)



Figure 2.13 Stewart, M. 2010. Umbrella, hat, hooks [digital drawing] (Centre for Visual Art, Staff Exhibition, Carnegie Art Gallery, Kimberley)



Figure 2.14 Stewart, M. 2010. Radio [digital drawing] (Centre for Visual Art, Staff Exhibition, Carnegie Art Gallery, Kimberley)



Figure 2.15 Stewart, M. 2010. PJ's, hat, umbrella and coat [digital drawing] (Centre for Visual Art, Staff Exhibition, Carnegie Art Gallery, Kimberley)



Figure 2.16 Stewart, M. 2010. A morning constitutional [digital drawing] (Centre for Visual Art, Staff Exhibition, Carnegie Art Gallery, Kimberley)



Figure 2.17 Stewart, M. 2010. Golf clubs [digital drawing] (Centre for Visual Art, Staff Exhibition, Carnegie Art Gallery, Kimberley)

CHAPTER 3

THE ‘BIG MAN’ THEME

3.1 A brief overview

In this section I return to the textual research on precedents on the ‘Big Man’ theme that I engaged in while developing and executing the subject matter of my film. This included both my desire to generalize the theme by linking it to the biblical character of Nebuchadnezzar and by investigating 19th-century accounts of the hero figure, and to specify the theme in relation both to the African and South African contexts. Finally, my research in this regard also concerned the question of how I could explore the idea of the ‘Big Man’ in ways that respond to the existing iconography but also give my work a new and personal inflection. My research in this latter field involved exploring links with images found in the history of Western art and in more recent South African art production.

The work of South African artists such as Robert Hodgins (1920–2010) and William Kentridge (1955–) were an inspiration at the outset of my project and I have been intrigued by their ‘Big Man’ subject matter for some years. Furthermore, during the course of creating my film, I became conscious of other South African artists whose work controversially criticizes the current South African leadership under Jacob Zuma. While Kentridge and Hodgins refer mostly to fictional ‘Big Man’ archetypes, South African artists such as Brett Murray (1961–), Jonathan Shapiro (1958–) and Ayanda Mabulu (1981–) have over the last few years exhibited images of Zuma that challenge his suitability as the leader of South Africa and highlight the perception of his increasing ‘Big Man’ status. These critical works also resonate with my film, which ends with an animated portrait of Zuma and an archival audio recording of Zuma laughing (while being challenged by various opposition party members on allegations of corruption). The aim here is to suggest that he is our latest ‘Big Man’.

Visually and stylistically, the ‘Big Man’ theme of the film was also influenced by images in Western art history. In particular, the film was influenced by those images that critically explore notions of power as they relate to powerful figures and images that either represent

or explore the subject of Nebuchadnezzar. Significantly, these images explore the idea of powerful individuals as fallen or stripped in some way of their power. The study accessed various images within this theme; some were useful as secondary source material while others, notably the works of Francis Bacon and William Blake, informed the visual conceptualisation of the 'fallen' Vorster/ Nebuchadnezzar character.

As well as the iconographic influences which significantly helped to shape my exploration, specific literary references by Riccardo Orizio (2002), Michela Wrong (2000) and Giles Foden (1998) were also vital to the research and wherein fact the initial spur for the project. Of particular interest to me was the fact that these texts deal not only with despotism in general, but also with the phenomenon of the African dictator. Importantly, all of these texts are in various ways literary portraits of particular dictators, which significantly influenced the decision to show a specific character, in the person of Vorster, while at the same referring to an archetype by placing Vorster in the role of Nebuchadnezzar. I also broadened my textual research on the 'Big Man' theme by investigating the broader definition of the 'Big Man' against the 19th-century theorist Thomas Carlyle's 'Great Man Theory' and Friedrich Nietzsche's dialogue on 'great men' (Carlyle 2012[1841]: 189; Nietzsche 2011b[1889]: 44). While Carlyle and Nietzsche's dialogues on the hero figure do not espouse the notion of the 'Big Man' as it relates to this dissertation or to my film, they do provide historical textual precedents from whence the more negative connotation of the notion emerges in the form of 'great dictators', exemplified by the likes of Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Francisco Franco, Pol Pot, Kim Jong Il and Benito Mussolini⁴.

3.2 The 'Big Man' in Africa

The term 'Big Man' is associated with the phenomenon of the African dictator and with despotism in general (Wrong 2000: 4). Throughout South Africa's political history, from apartheid to the present, there have been leaders who have been associated either directly with the term 'Big Man' or with despotism. In the film the title, *Big Man*, refers variously

⁴I am aware of the complex, broad and extremely dense history of the rise of the dictator in both Western, Eastern and African history but rather than attempt an historical exploration of dictatorship in general, I have elected to focus specifically on the related concept of the 'Big Man' and its specific African context as this relates most significantly to the film and to research conducted while creating the film. However, the discussion does consider aspects of the broader Western concepts of the 'Big Man' and the dictator when it significantly relates to critical matrix of the film and its contexts.

to the biblical character of King Nebuchadnezzar, to the character of BJ Vorster, and to historical and contemporary South African leadership, from Dr HF Verwoerd to President Jacob Zuma, although it must be noted that this concept applies selectively to South African political leadership, and does not describe all South African heads of state to date. However, in the context of the apartheid era the National Party has been referred to as an authoritarian dictatorship and various leaders, including Verwoerd and Vorster, have been noted for their despotic tendencies (Bloomberg 1989: 107, 150).

Within the context of Africa, the terms 'Big Man rule' and the 'Big Man syndrome' refer to one-party rule or fragile democratic systems that allow for the rise of oppressive dictatorships. It appears that such leaders keep a tight hold on their power through neopatrimonialism, and are commonly endorsed and supported at the onset of their rise to power by the West. According to Guled (2009):

The Big Man syndrome is firmly entrenched in the state machinery and political culture of Africa, albeit nurtured and protected by an intimidating security apparatus, intimate cabal and hordes of cronies with secure footholds in lucrative positions. Besides, the Big Man almost always enjoys the unqualified support of Western Powers, particularly the U.S., which has a history of infatuation with the Big Yes Man. (Guled 2009)

A notion of the 'Big Man' that reflects the broader understanding of the term is also historically associated with countries such as Malaysia, and with countries in Polynesia and central Africa, where a 'Big Man' is someone who attains an elevated status and a supportive, subservient following through deeds and actions that serve to assert his power and influence. Such cultures, however, distinguish between the notion of a traditional leader (such as a chief or a member of royalty) and that of a 'Big Man'. According to Sahlins (1963: 289), a chief or a king usually attains status through succession, either by right of lineage or succession, rather than by strong man tactics. However, lineage leadership of this nature does not preclude 'Big Man'-type rule, as can be seen in many historical Western precedents. In most African countries with democratic constitutions, the traditional leadership role of chieftains and royalty has been diluted and redefined. Democratic political structures may incorporate a network of chiefs who are attached to groups (traditionally clans and tribes) and geographical areas, but the role of the traditional leader is relegated to that of mediator between communities and local and provincial

government. The present South African government, for example, acknowledges traditional leadership (in the form of chiefs and those with royal lineage) and has incorporated representation of traditional leaders in local and provincial government in an attempt to realign these traditional leadership roles within South Africa's constitutional democracy, for example through the *Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Amendment Act* (Republic of South Africa 2009).

The phenomenon of the 'Big Man syndrome' in Africa is undoubtedly complex, and each case is determined by the nuances, histories and foreign relations of the particular country in which it arises. Nonetheless, in so many cases the rise (and fall) of the African 'Big Man' is characterized by corruption, absurdity, farce, horror, chaos and rebellion. Epitomized in the dictator, in Africa the Big Man himself is often a farcical and terrifying personification and encapsulation of these aspects of the phenomenon. Michela Wrong (2000) in her description of Mobutu Sese Seko (President of Zaire from 1971 to 1997) and his tyranny suggests that:

His impassive portrait, decked in comic-opera uniform, kept watch on his behalf, glowering from banks, shops and reception halls. 'Big Man' rule had been encapsulated in one timeless brand: leopard skin toque, Buddy Holly glasses and the carved cane. [...] In Mobutu's hands, the country became a paradigm of all that was wrong with post-colonial Africa. Here the anarchy and absurdity that simmered in so many other sub-Saharan nations were taken to their logical extremes. [...] His personal fortune was said to be so immense, he could personally wipe out the country's foreign debt. (Wrong 2000: 10–11)

Similarly, these extremes and the coexistence of both the farcical and the terrifying are echoed in the character and rule of former Ugandan President Idi Amin. Amin, notorious for his corrupt and brutal dictatorship, referred to himself as "His Excellency President for Life Field Marshal Ali Hadj Doctor Idi Amin Dada, VC, DSO, MC, Lord of all the Beasts of the Earth and Fishes of the Sea and Conqueror of the British Empire" (Sosik & Jung 2009: 268)". The development of the 'Big Man' theme within the context of the subject matter of my film drew on the following texts: Riccardo Orizio's *Talk of the devil: Encounters with seven dictators* (2003), Giles Foden's *The Last King of Scotland* (1998) and Michela Wrong's *In the footsteps of Mr Kurtz: Living on the brink of disaster in Mobutu's Congo* (2000). These books all explore 20th-century dictators, mostly from

Africa. Foden and Wrong explore the complex personalities and rise and fall of former tyrants Idi Amin and Mobutu Sese Seko. While Foden's novel is a fictional narrative, it is closely based on the historical events of Amin's life and career. This approach to narrative strongly influenced that of the film, in particular the idea of portraying the biblical episodes of King Nebuchadnezzar's dreams using the character of Vorster in the film. Like Foden's account of Amin, the film draws strongly on factual events and situations relating to Vorster's rise to power, yet places these within a fictional reality (the biblical story of Nebuchadnezzar). Foden's fictional reality draws closely on factual accounts relating to Amin's life and context. Similarly, my film also draws on factual details relating to Vorster's tenure as the Prime Minister of South Africa. However, my film also locates the narrative within the biblical story and places Vorster in the role of Nebuchadnezzar, thus turning the narrative into an allegorical tale rather than a believable reimaging of Vorster's life.

The extraordinary characters of Amin and Mobutu as portrayed by Foden and Wrong impacted on the decision to put the real person of Vorster in the role of Nebuchadnezzar, rather than using a fictional tyrant. Also, I realised that what made the personalities portrayed in these literary texts more terrifying was, alongside the absurdity and horror of their dictatorships, the semblance of humanity and normality they were simultaneously capable of presenting. Orizio explains that his primary inspirations for his book were two newspaper clippings from the *Guardian*. Both clippings referred to former African dictators, both of whom were accused of cannibalism. One read "Former emperor goes home and proclaims his sainthood", while the other read "Former Uganda dictator goes shopping in the frozen food aisle". The former clipping talks of Jean-Bedel Bokassa and the latter of Idi Amin (Orizio 2003: 2). These juxtapositions of horror and absurdity coupled with seemingly mundane and often very human behaviour is a common thread in the literary portrayals of these dictators. For example, before he became a "caricature blood-soaked despot", Idi Amin was described by the international media as a "gentle giant" when he first came to power in 1971 (La Guardia 2003). Even well into his dictatorship, while he was widely perceived as a monster and madman, some acknowledged his charismatic, almost appealing character.

The idea of Vorster being a 'Big Man' is a loose interpretation of the 'Big Man' syndrome. While his rise to power does not echo that of the typical African dictator, Vorster's term in

the South African parliament has been likened to an oppressive dictatorship (Baigrie & Achmat 2013: 20). Baigrie and Achmat (2013) describe the apartheid government under Vorster as behaving “in the same brutal way used by oppressive governments today through state sanctioned violence”, also describing some of the oppressive legislation enforced by Vorster’s government as despotic (Baigrie & Achmat 2013: 20.). However, Vorster did not display the insane self-delusions and extremes of personality of the likes of Amin and Bokassa. Neither is he viewed as the monster Verwoerd was. In the words of the Progressive Federal Party MP (1959–1989) Helen Suzman: “There was something almost diabolical about Verwoerd, something on a different plane, above influencing, that actually made me frightened of the man. Vorster is flesh and blood” (Time Inc. 1967: 31). Similarly the March edition of *Time* magazine in 1967 reads:

When Balthazar Johannes Vorster took over as South Africa’s Prime Minister six months ago, the world had little reason to expect that he would be much different from the assassinated Hendrik Verwoerd, the apostle of Apartheid. Vorster had, after all, been Verwoerd’s police boss for five years, and he looked even tougher and more unbending than the white-thatched Verwoerd. But Vorster has been a considerable surprise. While not basically changing South Africa’s policy of racial separation, he has proved far more reasonable than his predecessor, injecting some humanity and even humor. (Time Inc. 1967: 34)

Nonetheless, the ruthless methods Vorster subsequently used against his opponents, his unflinching right-wing views, and his political decisions have been described as both cruel and despotic (Baigrie & Achmat 2013: 21). Vorster was the Minister of Justice in 1964, overseeing the Rivonia Trial in which Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment, and later, as Prime Minister, he implemented the Terrorism Act No 83 of 1967, which allowed people to be detained without trial. It is estimated that at least 80 people (including the now iconic Steve Biko) died in prison while detained under this Act. He also abolished all non-white political representation and was in office at the time of the watershed 1976 Soweto Riots, in which hundreds of protesting black high school children were killed after police opened fire (Ndlovu 2011: 341)⁵.

⁵ The school students were protesting against the Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974, implemented by Vorster’s government, which forced all black schools to use Afrikaans and English as languages of instruction. One of the slogans chanted was “If we must do Afrikaans, Vorster must do Zulu” (Ndlovu 2011: 341).

Hermann Giliomee (1983) in his essay “BJ Vorster and the sultan’s horse” comments on the dual sides of Vorster’s personality:

What struck me most about Vorster was that he was at the same time both a very charming and a very chilling man. The charm, of course, worked in the first place for the Afrikaners. By the mid-1970s he was among Afrikaners by far the most popular leader of this century. Down-to-earth but yet unmistakably a leader, serious but a masterly deadpan joker, someone with the approachability of a favourite uncle but never one to allow any liberties. [...] The chill came through when he started to talk about the white-black power struggle. If there was any compassion for his black opponents or any sense that they were fellow South Africans I failed to detect it. (Giliomee 1983: 3)

Unlike Foden’s historically detailed portrait of Amin, seen through the eyes of the fictional character of Amin’s personal physician, my film does not aim to paint a detailed portrait of Vorster or his rise and fall as a political leader. Using the format of the short animated film, my aim was to portray Vorster during his prime in the role of the biblical king, Nebuchadnezzar. This was an attempt to explore the dual impulses to both generalise and localise the concept of the ‘Big Man’. Nebuchadnezzar is a famous archetype of a morally corrupt leader, and is a character most international audiences would be aware of, whereas Vorster is character specific to the South African context and is lesser known internationally. At the same time this attempt to show both an archetype and a real individual also relates to the character of Vorster who (like Foden’s account of Amin’s personality), as Giliomee describes, could be calculating and cruel on the one hand and yet also had a capacity for warmth and humour. The dual nature of the exploration of both the general and the specific also extends to the narrative structure of the film: the narrated story and the written inserts closely follow the biblical narrative, while the visual story is an imaginary tale showing Vorster (during his time as Prime Minister of South Africa) having the same dreams and suffering the same punishment as Nebuchadnezzar.

Vorster’s banishment into the wilderness, while echoing that of Nebuchadnezzar’s, also echoes his own political demise and disgrace. During his tenure Vorster was involved in the ‘Muldergate scandal’, otherwise known as the ‘Information scandal’, along with Dr Connie Mulder (Vorster’s Minister of Information) and Dr Eschel Rhoodie (Secretary of Department of Information). The plan was to use government resources from the defence

budget to launch a propaganda war in support of apartheid. In 1973 Vorster agreed at the behest of Dr Mulder to transfer around R64 million from the defence budget to finance a number of propaganda projects. These plans included the illicit use of funds to establish *The Citizen*, the only pro-National Party, English-language newspaper (Brooks, Spector 2013). In 1979, after a commission of inquiry, it was concluded that Vorster knew about the corruption and had sanctioned it. He resigned in disgrace from his position as State President, a position he had been elected into after he had been replaced by PW Botha as Prime Minister in 1978, when he stepped down for health reasons (Kalley, Schoeman & Andor 1999: 440–441). Giliomee (1983) describes Vorster as cutting a tragic figure in his last years, and states that he retired “an embittered man, feeling himself betrayed by his closest political allies [...] he died with much he sought to build [...] either greatly impaired or in ruins” (1983: 2–3). This perception of Vorster at the end of his life did impact on my portrayal of him as somewhat more human and introspective in the wilderness and at his residence at Groote Schuur where he experiences his troubled dreams. This contrasts with the earlier portrayal of him in his prime, in the animated sequence of his acceptance speech soon after his inauguration as Prime Minister of South Africa in 1966.

As mentioned, Vorster is not the only ‘Big Man’ presence in the film. The film begins with the funeral of Dr HF Verwoerd, widely known as the ‘architect of apartheid’ and viewed by many as a totalitarian dictator (Irwin 2012: 158). The film ends with an animated portrait of the current South African President, Jacob Zuma, who more and more resembles the typical African ‘Big Man’. His presidency has been plagued with accusations of misconduct, including corruption, nepotism, self-enrichment, rape, sanctioned police violence and illicit spending of state funds. Zuma’s ‘Big Man’ style, rule and lifestyle are articulated by commentators such as the historian and journalist RW Johnson⁶ in his article “South Africa’s Big Man: Jacob Zuma’s lifestyle is all very well for tribal chiefs, but not for the president of a constitutional democracy”:

Both his harem and his vast new palace are part of the African ‘big man’ style. This

⁶ In 2010 Johnson had an article published on the *London Review of Books (LRB)* website titled *After the World Cup*, in which he discussed the immigrant workers in Cape Town. In a paragraph following this discussion he mentioned a troop of baboons which had been causing mayhem in a Cape Town suburb. The LRB’s editor received a letter signed by more than 70 South African and international cultural figures accusing Johnson of racism. While the LRB removed the publication from its website, the editor did not publish the letter, stating that she believed that the signatories had wrongly interpreted Johnson’s essay as making an “‘explicit connection’ between baboons and migrants that did not exist” (Younge 2010).

is all very well for tribal chiefs, but not for the President of a constitutional democracy, where accountability is crucial at every level. If you justify things by custom, then how can you cope with Sharia law and honor killings? Or with the corruption and nepotism which derive from obeying the traditional imperatives to help one's extended family? Thus far [Mr.] Zuma's only real achievement is to read his speeches out loud a little better than he did at first. (Johnson 2010)

While Verwoerd is not physically portrayed in the film, his presence is strongly conveyed in the opening scene of the film, which shows his funeral after his assassination in 1966. While, like Vorster, Verwoerd is not the archetypal African 'Big Man', his pro-apartheid government and policies were viewed by the international community as equivalent to a ruthless "despotic dictatorship" (Asante 1985: 66). Notably, Nelson Mandela in his first letter to Verwoerd in 1961 described Verwoerd's government as a "grim dictatorship" (Hassen 1998: 429).

3.2.1 The early emergence of 'Big Men' and the concept of the dictator in Ancient Rome

While my study is primarily an exploration of the 'Big Man' theme within the contemporary South African context, it is useful to briefly engage with the broader complexities of the theme as it applies to the Western origins of 'Big Man'-type and tyrannical rule. Mary Beard in her book *SPQR: A history of Ancient Rome* (2015) discusses the emergence of 'Big Men' in Western history, which she dates as far back as the 6th century BCE in Rome. Even though this period is described by Ancient Roman writers as a regal period, Beard claims that it bore no resemblance to the imperialism of later Rome and that in reality in "this early period of Rome's history, it might be better to think in terms of chiefs or big men instead of kings" (Beard 2015: 145). Beard describes Rome at this time as a world of 'Big Men' who generally were quite mobile and able to move between various towns with "equally mobile members of their militia bands", exerting both power and influence either in a friendly or hostile way. While subsequent periods, up until the 1st century BCE, involved the gradual introduction of an organised political constitution based on concepts of an electorate, a senate, citizenship and liberty (some of the fundamental foundations of modern Western democracy), Ancient Rome also saw the

rise of the first dictators. According to Beard, Sulla (Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix) was the first Roman dictator in terms of the contemporary understanding of the term. She describes how in 82 BCE he orchestrated “his own election as ‘dictator for making laws and restoring order to the *res publica*’”. At this time the concept of dictatorship was understood as a temporary appointment which allowed an individual (often of military rank, but not exclusively) to act with impunity for a limited period of time to restore order during a state of emergency. However, Sulla’s dictatorship differed from previous dictatorial appointments in that he placed no limit on his time in office and he was given unlimited powers to create or change any laws with complete immunity from prosecution. According to Beard, this concept of political power “is one of Rome’s most corrosive legacies”. While Sulla’s three-year dictatorship ended peacefully for him with his retirement from office in 78 BCE, Julius Caesar, whom Beard identifies as the second dictator (in the modern sense of the term) of Ancient Rome, was famously assassinated in 44 BCE. This act of assassination she describes as having provided the model “and somewhat awkward justification, for the killing of tyrants ever since” (Beard 2015: 477).

It is necessary to contextualise the concepts of ‘Big Men’ and dictators within the history of Ancient Rome not only because it concerns the Western origins (and the broader understanding) of these concepts but also because Roman history extends to the broader territories of the empire, which included “Roman Africa” (mostly North Africa). Certain Roman governors who were sent to North Africa earned reputations as tyrannical ‘Big Men’ and were often able to exert unchecked power over the areas under their control. Gaius Sallustius Crispus (or Sallust as he known) is, in Beard’s view, a notorious example of such a leader. Although he is credited with having written “one of the sharpest pieces of political analysis to survive the Ancient world” (2015: 47) (an essay titled the *War against Catiline*), his period as Roman governor in North Africa was clouded by extreme and unscrupulous corruption. In this way the early Ancient Roman origins of the concept of the ‘Big Man’ and its later association with the tyrant or dictator was introduced to and was present in Africa during the early period of Ancient Rome.

3.2.2 The ‘Big Man’: Precedents in South African art

While Nelson Mandela offered a post-apartheid democratic alternative to the African ‘Big Man’ rule of the likes of Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe and the Congo’s Mubutu Sese Seko,

South Africa's current President Jacob Zuma and his government have for some time been seen to be "moving toward the authoritarian, corrupt and inefficient African 'big man' style of governance (Campbell 2016: 17)". Two artists whose work spans both the apartheid and post-apartheid eras, and for whom the notion of the 'Big Man' resonates deeply throughout their work, are William Kentridge (1955–) and Robert Hodgins (1920–2010). This section will explore and contrast the various ways in which the 'Big Man' theme applies to the work of both these artists, including their shared influence by the French Symbolist Alfred Jarry's play *Ubu Roi* (1896), which details the horrific and absurd exploits of the central character, the despotic King Ubu. Their shared exploration of portraying the 'Big Man' as an archetype, rather than a specific individual, both inspired my own investigation and provided a context for my research into developing a different iconography for this key topic.

The exploration will also consider South African artists who have explored the 'Big Man' theme in terms of a specific individual. In particular I have chosen to investigate the work of South African artists who have produced provocative and controversial images of President Jacob Zuma that directly challenge the current South African leadership and engage with the notion of the 'Big Man' as it applies to the more recent South African context. Artists Brett Murray and Ayanda Mabulu, and cartoonist Jonathan Shapiro have all come under fire from the ruling ANC (including from Zuma himself) for publicising images they perceive as disrespectful to the President. As my research for my film also included a critical portrayal of the current South Africa leadership under Zuma, I have been following their work with interest. My film does not present Zuma in the controversial and compromising states that these artists have done. However, the animated portrait of the South African President at the end of the film does similarly aim to present him in a critical light. The sequence also includes an audio clip of Zuma's derisive laughter in Parliament while being challenged regarding corruption charges. His reaction was widely criticised and reported on in the media, and was generally interpreted as showing a lack of culpability and respect for the South African legal system (Hawker 2015).

3.2.3 William Kentridge and Robert Hodgins: Ubu and the 'Big Man'-inspired imagery

The internationally acclaimed South African artist, William Kentridge, is arguably one of

the most important contemporary artists and his impact on the art of animation (in South Africa and abroad) is significant — to the extent that when one engages with animation in the ‘fine arts’ arena, it is within the shadow of Kentridge. The theme of the ‘Big Man’ is one that runs through much of his collective work (productions, animations and prints), and appears in the form of various fictional ‘Big Man’ or ‘Big Man’-type characters. These notably include the corrupt industrialist and real estate magnate Soho Eckstein, and Ubu, based on the despotic character of the same name from Jarry’s play *Ubu Roi* (1896). Ubu is the central character of his animated film *Ubu Tells the Truth* (an animation that was borne out of the multimedia production *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, written by Jane Taylor and directed by Kentridge with the collaboration of the Handspring Puppet Company). The most recent manifestation of a ‘Big Man’-type character can be seen in the form of a disembodied nose in Kentridge’s multimedia opera, *The Nose*, based on Nikolai Gogol’s absurdist short story of 1836.

Soho Eckstein is one of Kentridge’s best known fictional characters and over time has emerged as a third-person self-portrait and sometimes alter ego for the artist himself. Kentridge asserts that he did not consciously plan the character of Soho, a corrupt, Jewish industrialist, but that the character arose from a dream and developed from there. While he admits that Soho has become a third-person self-portrait and sometimes alter ego, Kentridge also claims that when he first drew Soho, the character was in the likeness of his grandfather. That Soho eventually assumes the likeness of Kentridge is partly by chance, as Kentridge explains that this was due to his reluctance to employ a model for six months, so he chose to draw himself from a mirror instead (Hanley 2010). Soho rose to prominence as a central character in a continuously evolving work titled *Nine Drawings for Projection*⁷. This consists of nine short animations: *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris* (1989), *Monument* (1990), *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old* (1991), *Mine* (1991), *Felix in Exile* (1994), *History of the Main Complaint* (1996), *WEIGHING ... and WANTING* (1998), *Stereoscope* (1999), and *Tide Table* (2003).

Soho’s life in Johannesburg during the last years of apartheid is reflected upon in this series of short films, as Soho is caught up in the political and social upheaval of the time (Christov-Bakargiev 1998: 60). While Soho shares characteristics with the archetypal ‘Big

⁷ Felix Teitlebaum and Soho Eckstein were conceived simultaneously and have both come to represent an alter ego and third-person self-portrait of the artist. However, in contrast to Soho, Felix is not a ‘Big Man’. Rather he is more a reflection of an aspect of the artist — a complex, isolated and sensitive character.

Man', he is not the typical 'Big Man' associated with the 'African dictator' or with despotism in general. Nonetheless, he exhibits some of the main characteristics of the archetypal 'Big Man' in that he is wealthy, corrupt and powerful, and is also presented as a fictional 'ruler of Johannesburg' (Leonard 1999). Also, as with the archetypal 'Big Man', Soho is implicated in the political and social injustice of the time. In *Mine*, for example, the third animation in his *Nine Drawings for Projection* series, Kentridge shows Soho's complicity (in the exploitation of his workers, and their poor living and working conditions), through a series of drawings which metamorphose into each other. A scene in this film reveals Soho sitting up in bed (see Fig. 3.1). He pushes down a coffee plunger which becomes a mine shaft or drill, breaks through into the miners' cramped living areas and showers, continues down into the mines, and through a miner's body, which becomes a blood flow. Finally the plunger drills through the rock and emerges as a cross-section drawing of a slave ship (Plate & Smelik 2013: 53).



Figure 3.1 Kentridge, W. 1991. Drawing for the film 'Mine' (<https://cdn.kastatic.org/kasperseus-images/46a04b99f4b2cc72ab70044ad6088e289a5ef891.jpg>)

Michael Rothberg, in his essay "Multidirectional memory and the implicated subject: On Sebald and Kentridge" in the book *Performing memory in art and popular culture*, likens Kentridge's drawings in this scene to images of Nazi prisoner of war camps, pointing out

that these drawings of the mines, particularly the miners' living quarters, appear to be "modeled on a famous photograph from the liberation of Dachau" (Rothberg 2013: 52). While Kentridge claims that this is not the case, Rothberg suggests that: "Regardless of the artist's intentions, however, recognition of this modeling also casts a dark shadow over the images of miners in the shower, which can now be seen as an oblique reference to the gas chambers" (Rothberg 2013: 52). In this context, Soho's control over the mines and treatment of the workers is placed on a par with Hitler's control of the Nazi war camps and the atrocities of holocaust.

There are parallels and contrasts between Soho and the Vorster/Nebuchadnezzar character in my film. Firstly, in keeping with the biblical narrative of the film, the character of the Vorster/Nebuchadnezzar is given a chance to redeem himself. After failing to heed the prophetic warnings implicit in his dreams and interpreted by the Daniel (my Beyers Naudé character), Vorster/Nebuchadnezzar is driven from his kingdom and is made to live in the wilderness until he atones for his sins, which is in line with the biblical story. After seven years in the wilderness, he does repent and hence his kingdom and humanity are restored. Soho also undergoes a redemptive experience in Kentridge's post-apartheid film, *Tide Table* (2003). Here Soho is shown as clearly older than in the earlier films. He has lost his wealth and life of privilege, suffers from ill health and has violent, guilt-ridden nightmares. The film presents Soho sitting on a deck chair at Muizenburg beach in Cape Town (see Fig. 3.2) — the scene having moved now from Johannesburg to Cape Town, one of the sites for the 1996 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (a series of hearings on the abuses of human rights that took place during the apartheid era, clearly an underlying theme in Kentridge's film).



Figure 3.2 Kentridge, W. 2003. Drawing from 'Tide Table' (Soho sleeping) (http://prod-images.exhibit-e.com/www_mariangoodman_com/c16028fc.jpg)

Soho contemplates the ebb and flow of the tide, which reveals dream-like images ranging from nostalgic scenes from his past to horrific scenes of violence and suffering HIV/AIDS victims. In contemplating and confronting these scenes Soho appears to suffer remorse, a change of heart, and a glimmer of redemption. The closing scene of the film, where Soho gets up, braces himself and playfully tosses a stone into the water, seems to herald a new beginning. My film ends somewhat differently. Even though the Vorster/Nebuchadnezzar character appears to have atoned for his sins, the theme of Vorster's culpability and atonement is my wish fulfilment as the animator. However, the film ends with the intention of conveying to the audience that the cycle of culpability and the rise of 'Big Men' did not end with Vorster's tenure or with the new post-apartheid political dispensation. Furthermore, even though in reality Vorster felt betrayed by his own party and did appear to have a 'wilderness' period, it is unlikely that he ever truly took responsibility for any of the atrocities that occurred during his time in office. The film ends with the laughing, unrepentant portrait of current South African President Jacob Zuma, thus suggesting, in this particular narrative (and in keeping with the biblical story) that history repeats itself, the cycle of sin continues and that, as posited by Orizio, the 'Big Man' seldom feels remorse (Orizio 2003: 31). The absence of repentance thus completes my referencing of the biblical story, where Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's son and successor, is even more

corrupt than his father was and is utterly unrepentant (Daniel 5:22).

While Soho is created in Kentridge's likeness and may exhibit certain personality attributes of the artist, as Kentridge himself alleges, he used himself as the model for Soho as he did not want to employ a model for too extended a period of time. Kentridge's primary intention for this character was to portray Soho as a corrupt mining magnate and 'King of Johannesburg'. While there are clear parallels between Soho's narrative context and that of Vorster's in my film, my exploration of a 'Big Man' character differs from Kentridge's in that my character is based on a specific individual, in terms of both physical appearance and historical context. Kentridge's, on the other hand, is concerned with a fictional archetype. In contrast, during my initial research at the outset of this project I decided against creating a fictional, archetypal 'Big Man' character but opted rather to explore the portrayal of a character with a historical context that I was familiar with and could commit to. So, one of the motivations for choosing to portray Vorster was that even though the over-arching narrative for the film is fictional, his character, person and context were something that is relevant to my own context and history. Nonetheless, I obviously do reference an archetypal 'Big Man' through the simultaneous portrayal of the biblical story of King Nebuchadnezzar. But even though Vorster is cast in this role, he is specifically presented as himself and within his own context.

Kentridge's exploration of an archetypal 'Big Man' extends to a series of prints, animations and multimedia productions which he based on French Symbolist Alfred Jarry's insane, despotic, fictional King Ubu, the central character of his 1896 play, *Ubu Roi* (*King Ubu*). Jarry made the woodcuts and drawings for the original Ubu character on which Kentridge based his own Ubu. The first of these, *Véritable Portrait for Monsieur Ubu* (Alfred Jarry, 1896) is the blueprint for Jarry's subsequent Ubu images (see Fig. 3.3). Jill Fell, in her book *Alfred Jarry: An imagination in revolt* (2005) claims that Jarry's rotund figure with its spherical spiral design etched into its belly was a satirical jibe at the aesthetic ideas of theoreticians of the day, in particular Gustav Fechner, who hypothesised that the sphere denoted angelic purity. Ubu's head is, Fell posits: "a 'fear inducing' pointed head, which has all the attributes of the Spanish Inquisitors' hoods, connoting cruelty and torture" (Fell 2005: 28–29). Interestingly, Fell describes the stomach as representing an African shield and the head a mask, and asserts that this oddly shaped armour suggests that a grotesque dread-inspiring mass is housed beneath (2005: 28).



Figure 3.3Jarry, A. Véritable Portrait for Monsieur Ubu.
1896(https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/83/V%C3%A9ritable_portrait_de_Monsieur_Ubu.png/397px-V%C3%A9ritable_portrait_de_Monsieur_Ubu.png)

Kentridge's animated film *Ubu Tells the Truth* (1997) emerged from his collaboration with Jane Taylor and the Handspring Company in the multimedia stage production *Ubu and the Truth Commission*⁸. The play itself (and the subsequent animated projections) was inspired by a series of etchings based on Jarry's Ubu character that Kentridge created for the celebration of the centenary of Jarry's first staging of *Ubu Roi* in Paris. Kentridge's animated projections created for the production of *Ubu and the Truth Commission* were later re-edited to create the film *Ubu Tells the Truth*. In this film (which, as with the original etchings, is a re-interpretation of Jarry's *Ubu Roi*) the central character is the archetypal 'Big Man'— King Ubu, the corrupt, absurd, cruel and insane king of Jarry's play. The ruthless, fictional King Ubu is transported to the world of the Truth and

⁸While the production of *Ubu and the Truth Commission* is a potent expression of the potential absurdity and cruelty associated with individuals who abuse positions of power and is relevant to the subject of this research, I have chosen to focus on the re-edited film that emerged from the play, *Ubu Tells the Truth*. Kentridge's animated film is closer to the aesthetic and conceptual approach of my film than the multimedia stage production of *Ubu and the Truth Commission*. Furthermore, to discuss both productions would be somewhat repetitive as the re-edited film appears as isolated projections in the play.

Reconciliation Commission hearings of 1997. The Commission arose out of a settlement between the outgoing National Party and the incoming ANC. This was a dual process whereby the victims and survivors of apartheid atrocities would relate their stories and then the perpetrators of atrocities could come forward, give a full confession and receive amnesty. The film uses the absurd logic of Jarry's play to comment on the absurdities inherent in these hearings. Kentridge speaks of discordance between the stories of abuse from the victims themselves, including stories of abuse told by families of victims who were no longer alive, and the stories told by the perpetrators of the abuse, as well as the ways in which these stories were interpreted to the audience and the media at large. He explains the juxtaposition of horror and the absurd, for example when the interpreters were asked to mimic the traumatic gestures and outpouring of emotion and grief of the victims — thus turning the event into a “kind of ur-theatre” (Balme 2014: 35). Kentridge also talks of the irony surrounding the aims of the Commission, saying: “As people give more and more evidence of the things they have done they get closer and closer to amnesty and it gets more and more intolerable that these people should be given amnesty” (Taylor 1998: viii). In addition to animated drawings and torn paper cut-outs, Kentridge's animated film includes archival footage that references the early 1929 experimental film by Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel, *Un Chien Andalou (An Andalusian Dog)*, most notably the close-up of a young woman's eye — which appears to be forced open (and then cut with a razor) — in the opening shots of the film. Andrew Hennlich, in his essay *Amnesty with a Movie Camera*, also likens this image to the clinical ‘kino eye’ of Dziga Vertov's *Man with the Movie Camera* (1919) — a montage of the lens of a camera and a human eye (Hennlich 2015: 101). Referring to the camera's lens and apparent unfiltered vision, Vertov is quoted as saying: “I am an eye. I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, I am showing you a world, the likes of which only I can see” (Treske 2015: 90). The tyrannical, somewhat comic Ubu character appears at the beginning of the film, playfully but cruelly torturing and blinding the eye before appropriating it as a camera flash (see Fig. 3.4).

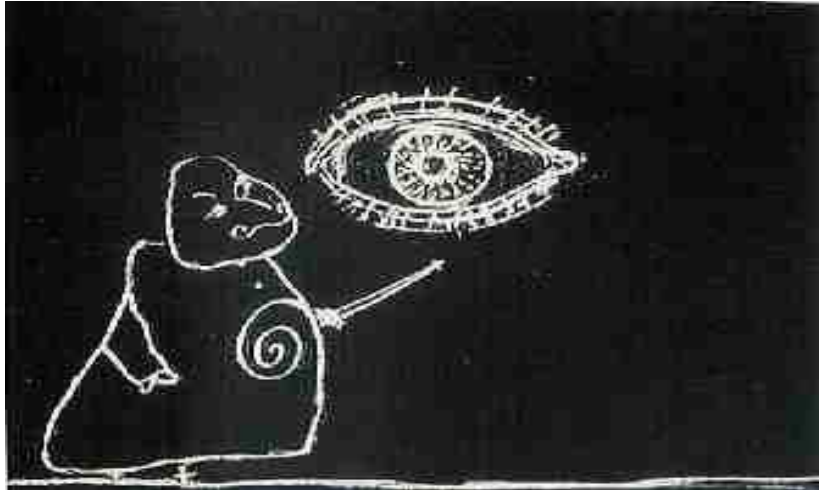


Figure 3.4 Kentridge, W. 1997. Still from 'Ubu Tells the Truth'
(http://www.squarecylinder.com/wp-content/uploads/image/KENTRIDGE/Ubu%20Tells%20the%20Truth_2.jpg)

Ubu morphs into a tripod, which becomes both a witness and documenter, and thereafter the main protagonist in the film. The Ubu character appears a couple more times in the film where he provokes the camera/ tripod, but the focus moves away from the tyrannical figure to scenes of apartheid abuses, which in turn move from archival news footage to memories and accounts from both the victims and perpetrators. These scenes are witnessed, documented and sometimes broadcast by the tripod/camera, which also becomes a television screen and radio (see Fig. 3.5).

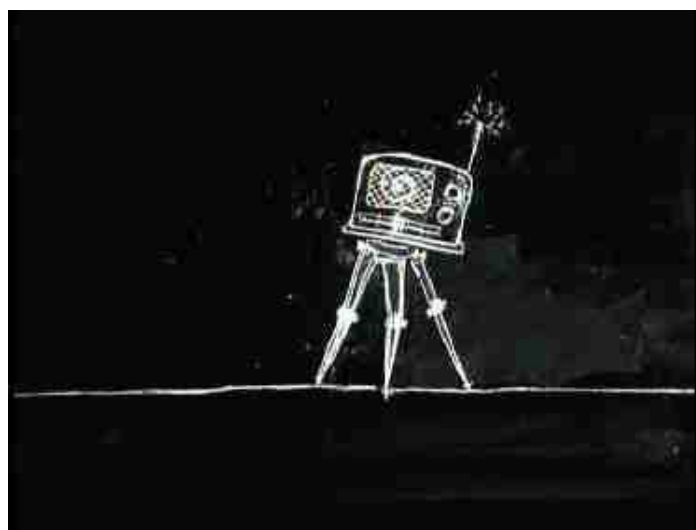


Figure 3.5 Kentridge, W. 1997. Still from 'Ubu Tells the Truth'
(<http://citygallery.org.nz/sites/default/files/Kentridge%20UBU26%20enews.jpg>)

Like Kentridge's, my film also draws on and references existing imagery of an iconic 'Big Man'. Where Kentridge visually references Jarry's Ubu character as a symbol of tyranny, for similar reasons I reference William Blake's visual conceptualisation in his 1795 series of etchings of Nebuchadnezzar. In my animation of Vorster in the wilderness — where he ends up like Nebuchadnezzar, naked, abject and on all fours — I drew strongly on Blake's image of Nebuchadnezzar, as this famous image (and Nebuchadnezzar himself) has come to be synonymous with "the regal oppressor" (Mee 1998: 108). Later on in this chapter I discuss my reference to Blake's Nebuchadnezzar etchings in detail. Also, like Kentridge's film, my film draws on archival news footage, although the nature of the footage I reference and the way in which I reference and use this footage are different from those of Kentridge. The footage I sourced does not show apartheid abuses, but rather scenes and events that illuminate my historical narrative. For example, I sourced footage such as Verwoerd's funeral and Vorster's inauguration speech, which I used to re-imagine and recreate the same events in paper cut-out animation. I also used stills which I digitally manipulated and integrated into the film as part of my settings. I discuss the precise nature of the exploration and use of archival footage and photographic archival material in Chapters Four and Five.

It is unclear whether or not Kentridge was aware of early French film maker Emile Cohl's *Fantasmagorie* (1908), one of the earliest animations, when he was creating the animated projections for *Ubu Tells the Truth*. However, in my exploration of the archive I found the schematic cartoon-like chalk drawings, the white line against a black backdrop, the irrational scenes of violence and the black humour of *Ubu Tells the Truth* reminiscent of Cohl's animation. Cohl's film, like Kentridge's, portrays people, animals and objects that interact, fight, tease, torture and metamorphose in a ludicrous and somewhat disturbing manner. It is both comic and horrific: for example, the main protagonist, a clown, is continually abused by 'Big Man'-like figures in various military uniforms (see Fig. 3.6). He is decapitated three times, is set alight and suffers various other cruelties that are meted out to him by these characters. Esther Leslie describes the film as presenting "an illogical narrative of cruelty and torture executed by people and things at war with other" (2002: 2).

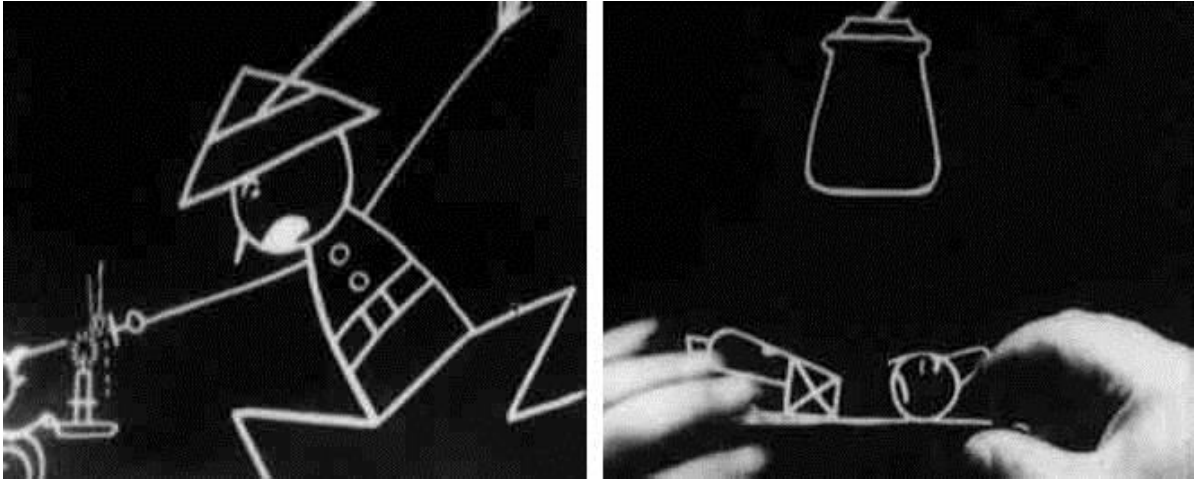


Figure 3.6 Cohl, E. 1908. Stills from ‘Fantasmagorie’
(<http://www.tmgonline.nl/index.php/tmg/article/view/2/51>)

The similarity of the portrayal and juxtaposition of absurdity, power, violence and horror between Cohl’s *Fantasmagorie* and Jarry’s *Ubu Roi* is not surprising given that Cohl was a contemporary of Jarry’s and part of the same Montmartre circle of avant-garde writers, journalists, musicians, performers and artists at the turn of the 20th century. Many of these people, Jarry and Cohl included, belonged to a group called the *Incoherents*, who responded to what they saw as the modern malaise with absurdity, laughter and morbidity, considering them the only antidotes possible given the cruel logic and false optimism of the technological age, and the horror of modern warfare (Leslie 2002: 2). Like Kentridge’s *Ubu Tells the Truth*, Cohl’s animation highlights the atrocities and cruelties meted out indirectly or directly by ‘Big Man’-type characters.

Another notable and more recent work by Kentridge that presents not so much the despotic ‘Big Man’ but the world of the ‘Big Man’ is his multimedia production of Shostakovich’s *The Nose* (1927–28), which is based on a Gogol short story that satirises Tzarist Russia’s despotic reign of terror and absurd bureaucracy in the 1830s. The main protagonist is a low-ranking official, Collegiate Assessor Kovalyov, who insists on being called “Major” and who wakes up one morning to find his nose is gone. Once freed from his face, the nose ambitiously rises up the ranks to become State Councillor, outranking and dissociating itself from its lowly owner. As a consequence of its new status the nose bears first-hand witness to the tyranny and brutality of the police state. Shostakovich’s opera transposes Gogol’s story to early 20th century Russia and adopts a deliberately modernist aesthetic

(Hanley2010). It is interesting to note that Shostakovich's opera premiered in 1930, a few years after Stalin had consolidated his power as the sole leader of Russia and inaugurated his own despotic reign of terror. Thus Gogol's story as presented by Shostakovich resonated with the social and political climate of the day. Shostakovich's modernist opera was criticised by the Bolshevik party for its inaccessibility to the broader public and two years later Stalin outlawed all modernist art as both intellectually and ideologically distanced from the masses. It would be replaced by the propagandist style of social realism. Social realism is seen to promote a pseudo-classical, idealised aesthetic criticised for its perceived kitsch language — and retrospectively has been relegated to symbolising a romanticised kitsch typical of the art of dictatorship eras (Groys 1992: 8). In his production of *The Nose*, Kentridge draws on both the social realist and modernist aesthetics, drawing specifically on Russian art from the turn of the century and setting the story during the 1917 Russian Revolution. He admits that he is drawn to the nostalgia of both the social realist and the avant-garde imagery of that period, but is at the same time aware of the complex relations that hold between these art forms and the tyrannical dispensation that was soon to emerge in Russia. It is not surprising that both Gogol's story and Shostakovich's opera would fascinate Kentridge, as both so clearly resonate with South Africa's oppressive, hierarchical political past, with its fair share of atrocities and abuse of human rights. The 'Big Man' is a constant undercurrent in Kentridge's production — from the projected archival footage of the unveiling of a gigantic statue of Stalin, to a representation of El Lissitzky's famous design for Lenin's podium, as well as documents and images relating to Stalin's 'bloody' purge of so-called traitors to the state. As Kentridge depicts the Nose travelling through the Tsarist capital, he puts the Nose on a horse. Jane Kinsman (2013) quotes Kentridge as saying

A horse is exactly the right scale for the magnification of a man, for making him magnificent. A man on a chair or at a table is ridiculous. On a pedestal we begin to let him grow. But put the man on a horse — and preferably a horse on a pedestal — and you have a hero or a tyrant, at any rate someone who has made a name for himself (Kinsman 2013) (see Fig. 3.7).



Figure 3.7 Kentridge, W. 2010. *The Nose*
 (http://www.whitehotmagazine.com/UserFiles/image/2010/kentridge%20nose/The-Nose_4.jpg)

Like Kentridge's films, my film is also influenced by modernist aesthetics. In Chapter Four of this dissertation I discuss the specific influences of early modernist experimental animators and artists. This discussion focuses largely on the impact that early film makers had on my film and details the particular imagery and approaches that inspired my film's visual content. I look, for example, at the influence of the paper cut-out silhouette animation of Lotte Reiniger. While to my knowledge Kentridge does not mention any influence by her, with his interest in the art of this period it is highly likely that he is aware of her work. Kentridge's reference to and application of the silhouette paper cut-out process in *The Nose* is very similar to that of Reiniger's. In an *Art 21* documentary, Kentridge demonstrates the paper cut-out technique he uses for the animation of a horse for the production of *The Nose*. While he uses an open form of animating without jointed parts (whereas Reiniger mostly used jointed puppets), the horse and its movement is visually reminiscent of the horse in Reiniger's *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*. Also, like Kentridge, I referenced specific modernist visual approaches. While my work, like Kentridge's, draws on silhouette paper cut-out animation, it specifically details the style of

the paper cut-out paper puppets of the German film maker Berthold Bartosch, whereas Kentridge's aesthetic is more in line with Weimar Republic propaganda poster art.

In addition to underlying the content of Kentridge's animated and multimedia productions, the 'Big Man' theme is strongly present in both serial and isolated prints and drawings. For example, the series of 30 etchings Kentridge created before and during the pre-production phase of *The Nose* show variants of this 'Big Man' iconography: the Nose on a horse (*Nose* 7, 2008), the Nose on a horse on a pedestal (*Another Kheppi Ending*, 2009), the Nose as a bust (*Nose* 25, 2009) and the Nose walking up to Lenin's podium (*Nose* 12, 2008). An earlier work such as *General* (1993/98) is, according to Sarah Kirk Hanley, "a potent and straightforward statement on the type of gross corruption that frequently accompanies military power" (Hanley 2010). She also refers to the influence on Kentridge of Weimar-period German Expressionists such as Otto Dix, Max Beckmann and George Grosz, all of whom depicted corpulent, corrupt uniformed officials and be-suited 'Big Man'-type figures (Hanley 2010). Judith Hecker in her essay *William Kentridge: Trace— Prints from the Museum of Modern Art* describes the series of eight etchings for *Ubu Tells the Truth* (1996–97) wherein Kentridge superimposes the Jarry-inspired cartoon of Ubu over a naturalistically rendered human figure (a portrait of Kentridge) (Hecker & Kentridge 2010: 60). The figure appears unable to shake off the jeering and exasperating figure of Ubu (see Fig 3.8). Hanley posits that in this series "Ubu represents the oppression exerted on individuals by corrupt power" (Hanley 2010).

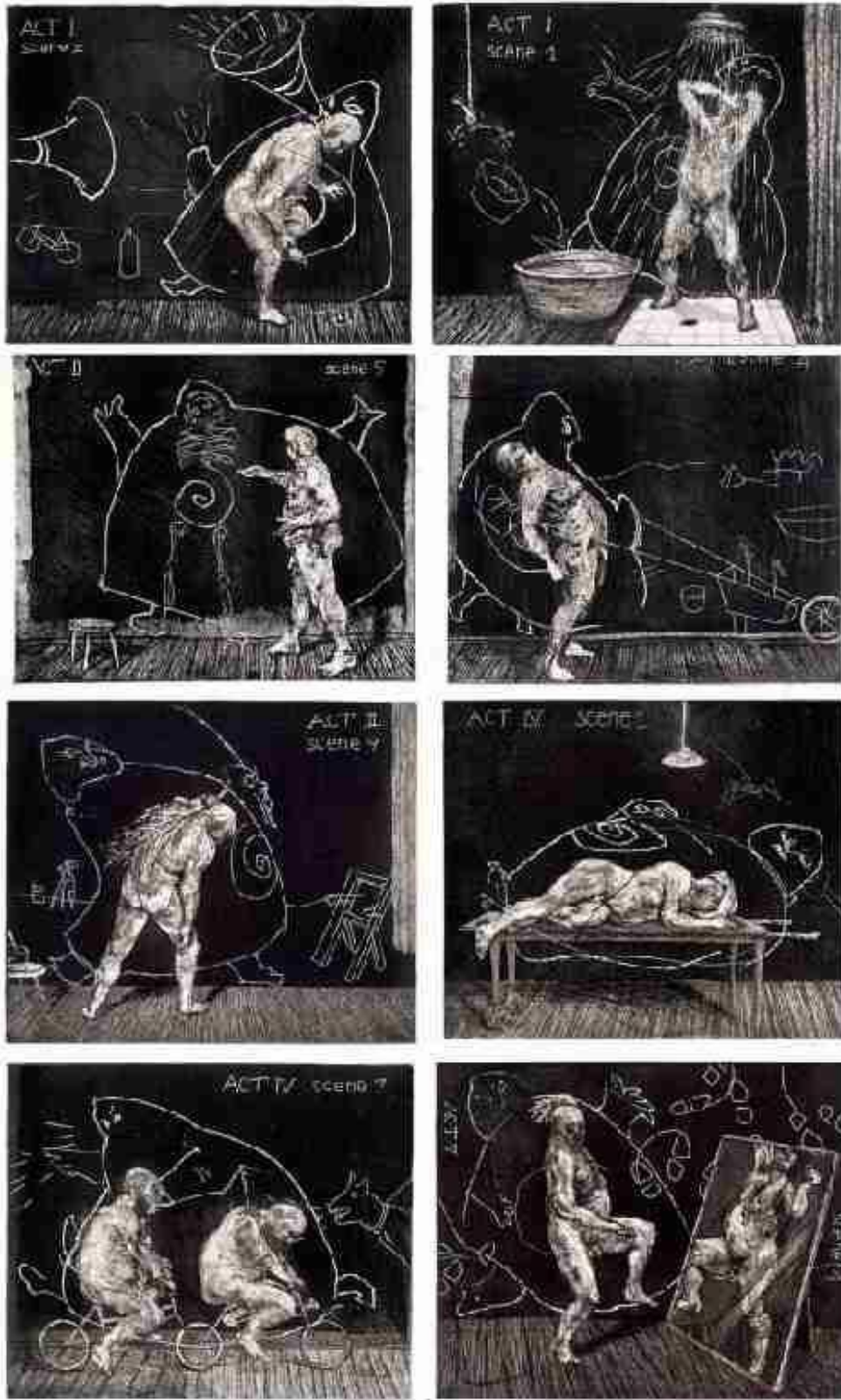


Figure 3.8 Kentridge, W. 1995–1997. Ubu Tells the Truth (archived editions) (<http://davidkrutprojects.com/artworks/ubu-tells-the-truth-by-william-kentridge-archived-editions>)

Kentridge apparently came across Ubu-inspired works by Robert Hodgins around the time of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Hodgins, while greatly respected by his peers and fellow artists, never received the international and critical acclaim of someone like Kentridge. Nonetheless, despite this fact, which Kendell Geers (2002: 64) puts down to problems in the international market place rather than to Hodgins' work, Hodgins produced a parallel body of Ubu-themed paintings, including what Geers describes as Ubu Roi's "modern counterpart — the fat businessman in stuffed suit" (2002: 67). According to Christiane Fioupou it was Hodgins's Ubu images that inspired Kentridge to combine the Alfred Jarry character with the evidence presented by both victims and perpetrators of apartheid during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, and which became the spur for *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (2002: 172). Since then Kentridge has worked on a number of collaborative projects with Hodgins, most of these spurred by their shared fascination with the Weimar period and of course Jarry's *Ubu Roi*. Hodgins's work, particularly his exploration of the iconography of the archetypal tyrant and its African counterpart, has been a longstanding influence on my own work and ideas. While my more representational visual aesthetic is very different to the 'Baconesque' distortions of Hodgins's work, his 'Big Man' content and exploration of the official state portrait format impacted on the initial research conducted for my film. My visual exploration of a 'Big Man' character culminated in something very different from Hodgins's images of the tyrant-figure. However, my exploration of Hodgins's work inspired me to attempt to create an aesthetic that reflected (like in Hodgins's work) an original visual exploration of such a figure. Hodgins's exploration of the state portrait format can be seen in my decision to end the film in a series of animated portraits of past and present South African heads of state. One image, for example, that provided a spur for this idea, and the idea of approaching it in a painterly and expressive way, was Hodgins's work titled *A Wicked Man Sumptuously Attired* (see Fig. 3.15).

Hodgins's first Ubu series dates from 1981 and he continued with this theme until his death in 2010. Unlike Kentridge's Ubu character, which is clearly reminiscent of the original Jarry woodcuts, Hodgins's Ubu takes on more various forms, some of which bear little resemblance to Jarry's creation. Now and again there is a shadow of the original Ubu character—the pointed head, for example, can be seen in *Ubu and the Commanders-in-Chief* (1981/82) (see Fig. 3.10) and *Ubu Interrogator II* (1983) (see Fig. 3.11). Nonetheless, all Hodgins's characters have a cartoonish grotesqueness that resonates with

Jarry's original visual conception (Powell 2002: 46–47). As with Kentridge, the notion of the tyrant is one that runs strongly through Hodgins's body of work and these Ubu-like characters are a strong expression of the artist's mistrust of powerful, influential figures, be they businessmen or politicians. This was a mistrust that Hodgins explains developed partly from his experience as a sub-editor, journalist and critic (from 1962 to 1966) for the South African magazine *Newscheck* in Johannesburg. It was during this time that Hodgins came into direct contact with the political and social issues of not only South Africa, but Africa in general. While he only began painting in earnest in the 1980s, this experience of both 'black' and 'white' African politics was vitally important to the subject matter of much of his work. For Hodgins, Ubu represented the archetypal despotic 'Big Man' in the Western historical context of the term, and in terms of the African dictator. Hodgins posits:

I wanted to indicate what Ubu could be [...] what interests me is the history of the flabby, evil man [...] Goering was a classic example and Idi Amin [...] I suppose he could be Chinese too. But all that fed into my distrust of politicians and my feeling about that placatory hand of the white guy in his white suit, about the savage new white and all those kinds of things. There is a painting of Ubu and the two commanders-in-chief. One of them looks like Goering who was very fond of white [...]. (Becker 2002: 37)

Hodgins is referring to two seminal paintings from his first Ubu series, *Ubu and the Black Politician* (1983) (Fig. 3.9) and *Ubu and the Commanders-in-Chief* (Fig. 3.10). The former shows two politicians, one black, one white. The white-suited, white politician (who, as implied by Hodgins, references Goering) sits with a placatory hand on the black politician's arm, and is giving him a sidelong glance that gives the impression of condescension and deceit. One is reminded of Guled's (2009) hypothesis of the "Big Yes Man", where he suggests that the African 'Big Man's' rise to power is often dependent on the support of Western politicians who are as venal as their African counterparts. In the latter painting, *Ubu and the Commanders-in-Chief*, Ubu is a 'Big Man'-type figure in a brown suit. Flanking him are the two commanders-in-chief (heads of state or military leaders), one a white Goering-like, white-suited figure, and the other a blue-suited figure. Both are decked out in full military regalia. The setting, with its bright red throne-like couch, and fleshy pink and acidic green background, simultaneously suggests opulence, flesh and blood. The overall affect is a theatrical, comical violence. Sean O'Toole in his

article “Nobody loves the Colonel” (2011) describes how he was reminded of this painting after watching breaking news on television showing Muammar al-Gaddafi delivering a speech to the Libyan people, sanctioning martyrdom. Dressed in his characteristic military regalia, with copious medals and ribbons, Gaddafi chose a bombed-out building for his setting, in which various props were installed, including a sculpture of a gold fist crushing an American fighter plane. O’Toole likens the theatre and comic horror of the scene (the climax of which was Gaddafi’s exit in a golf cart) and Gaddafi’s strong-man presence to Hodgins’s aesthetic:

I wish Rob Hodgins were here to see it. The thought ambushed me when the live news reporting cut to a crowd scene. Gaddafi loyalists were brandishing green flags and chanting that well-known chorus, the one with the looping refrain: “We love you unconditionally, dear leader.” The swoop of the live news camera briefly paused on a man, probably the mean age of an *Idols* contestant. He was holding a framed picture of the Colonel in full military attire, that is, with oversized hat and shoulders flowing waterfalls of gold ribbon. Ah yes, the big man of destiny in his military fatigues. Aren’t we intimately familiar with him? [...] Arguably Hodgins’s best work in this vein is his early 1980s oil on canvas *Ubu and the Commanders in Chief*. Two Gaddafi lookalikes flank a bald Macbeth with Henry Kissinger glasses. The opulent red couch and sickly pink background lend the painting a sanguine mood. (O’Toole 2001).



Figure 3.9Hodgins, R. 1983. *Ubu and the Black Politician*
(<http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539/11071/Nathan%20Jansen%20van%20Vuuren%20Thesis.pdf?sequence=2>)



Figure 3.10Hodgins, R. (1981/82) *Ubu and the Commanders-in-Chief*
(<http://www.artthrob.co.za/02feb/images/hodgins04a.jpg>)

Art historian Rayda Becker claims that while Ubu Roi “is a figment of the European imagination, Hodgins has made him part of Africa” (2002: 37). This is particularly true of his 1983 work *Ubu Interrogator II* (see Fig. 3.11). Here Hodgins has referred to a factual

account by the Afrikaans lawyer and author, Hugh Lewin, from his book *Bandiet out of Jail* (1978). The book recalls his experiences in Pretoria Central Prison after he was arrested and jailed for seven years under the Suppression of Communism Act (which banned any people or party for subscribing to aims that the apartheid government deemed in line with those of communism) for his activities and involvement in the banned African Resistance Movement. Lewin claims that his treatment at the hands of the Special Branch security force was particularly brutal as he was an Afrikaner and thus seen as a turncoat and the worst kind of traitor. The Security Branch was an elite section of the South African Police Force. In the 1960s Vorster (then Minister of Justice) gave the Security Branch the power to arrest, detain, interrogate and torture without trial anyone suspected of political activism. In Hodgins's painting a be-suited figure (no doubt a member of the Special Branch) with a white, featureless face and dark glasses sits rigidly at a desk. The pointed head clearly references Jarry's Ubu images. It is also eerily like the pointed white masks of a Ku Klux Klan costume, the dark glasses echoing the eye holes cut into the mask. On the floor is a drawn circle. Lewin describes how during his first interrogation and during all his subsequent brutal interrogation sessions a circle, in which he was made to stand for hours on end, was drawn in chalk on the floor (Lewin 1978: 17). As Becker posits, Hodgins's painting is "a painting of African politics" (2002: 35) and it certainly evokes the terror inspired by the Special Branch forces, the power they had, and their brutal interrogations which they meted out with impunity. While this is not a painting of a typical 'Big Man' powerful leader, Hodgins, both visually and in the title of this work, equates Jarry's tyrannical, corrupt and cruel character, King Ubu, with the be-suited police interrogator. This image epitomises Hodgins's reinvention of Ubu in the (apartheid era) South African context as the "savage new white" (Becker 2002: 35).

The Ubu-inspired theme is one that runs deeply through Hodgins's work. Notably, Ubu appears, re-imagined as various 'Big Man' or 'Big Man'-type characters, in a series of eight prints Hodgins made to mark the centenary of the first performance of Jarry's *Ubu Roi* in Paris. Hodgins called the series *Ubu Centenaire* which, according to Becker, indicates not only the centenary of the first performance of *Ubu Roi* but also "the malevolent history of the last 100 years" (2002: 36). Ubu appears in varying guises and forms in this series that illustrates Hodgins's extended exploration of the Ubu figure and his interest in "the history of the flabby, evil man" (Becker 2002: 37). The series begins with *No.1 France: The Dreyfus Affair – 1894* (see Fig. 3.12), referring to a political

scandal that began in 1894 and that divided France until its resolution more than a decade later. The scandal began with the trial of a French artillery officer of Jewish descent who was accused of betraying French military secrets to the German Embassy in Paris, tried and falsely convicted for treason. The controversy surrounding the affair was the view that anti-Semitic public opinion and media coverage rather than actual evidence determined the outcome of the trial. Since then the Dreyfus Affair has come to symbolise injustice and, as such, echoes the miscarriages of justice in apartheid South Africa. Although it must be noted that (as underlies much of the history of political upheaval, including that of South Africa) the divided opinion of this affair does not necessarily translate into the division between good and evil, or “‘virtue versus villainy’ but of fallible beings being pulled by ‘beliefs’, ‘loyalties’, ‘prejudices’, ‘ambition’, and ‘ignorance’” (Derfler 2002: 39).

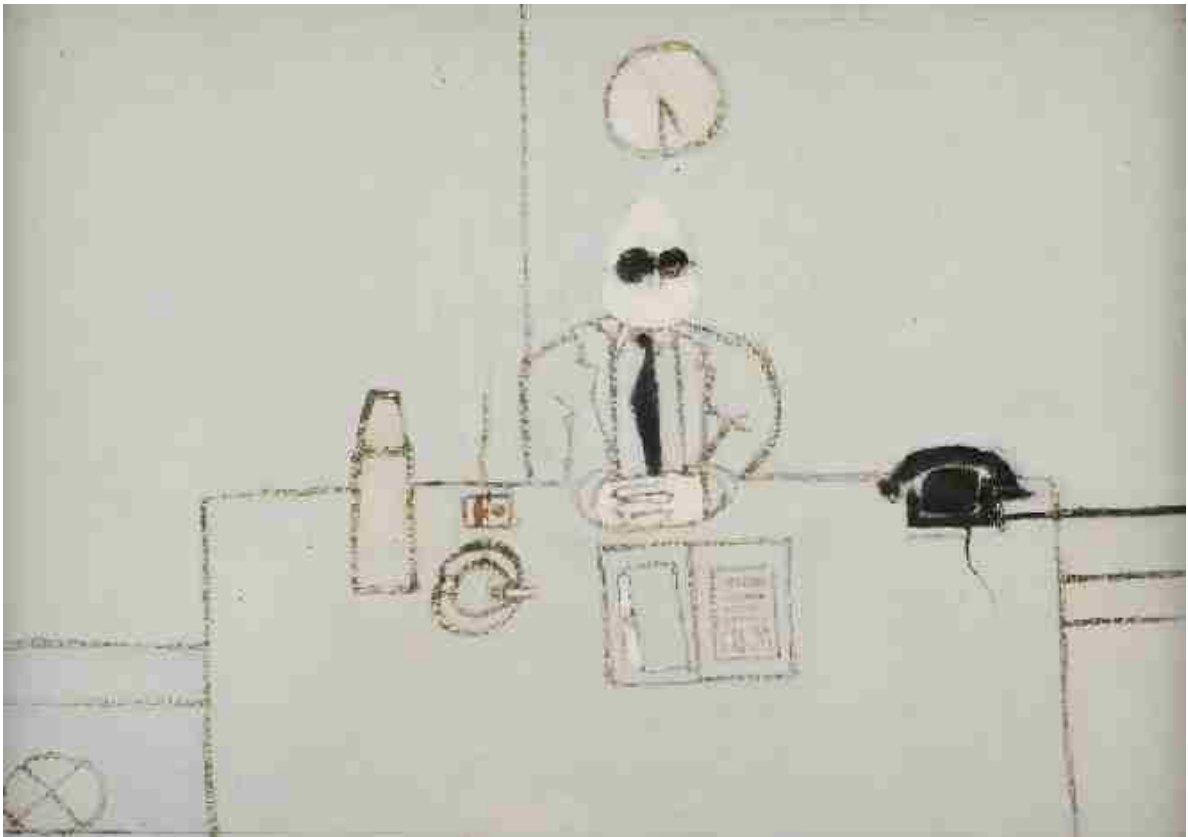


Figure 3.11Hodgins, R. 1983.Ubu Interrogator II
(http://lotimages.atgmedia.com/SR/35895/2916124/595-201411417720_original.jpg)

No 3. Berlin – Inflation – 1923 refers to a three year period (1921–1924) of hyperinflation during the Weimar Republic that caused widespread public discontent and misery as well as political and social unrest. In Hodgins’s image a self-satisfied banker (an Ubu-type because of his pointed head) sits unconcerned as mob violence is visible from the window

of his office. Behind the banker is a sign that reads “Alexanderplatz”. This clearly refers to 1923 Berlin, where mobs burnt down Jewish shops, venting their frustration on retailers who were constantly having to adjust their prices to the rising inflation. In Hodgins’s images the Ubu-type banker appears to have absolved himself of any responsibility, and seems unaffected and unconcerned by the surrounding chaos (see Fig. 3.13).



Figure 3.12Hodgins, R. 1996.No.1 France: The Dreyfus Affair – 1894(http://www.outofthecube.co.za/artists/102/img_1435.jpg)



Figure 3.13 Hodgins, R. 1996. No 3. Berlin – Inflation – 1923 (http://www.outofthecube.co.za/artists/102/img_1439.jpg)



Figure 3.14 Hodgins, R. 1996. No. 6 Central Africa? East Africa? 1960 (http://www.outofthecube.co.za/artists/102/img_1446.jpg)

In *No. 6 Central Africa? East Africa? 1960* (Fig. 3.14) one is reminded of Mr Kurtz from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, or the actual figure Conrad was believed to have modelled Kurtz on, the tyrannical Belgian Captain Léon Rom. Like Mr Kurtz, Rom displayed severed heads on the fence around his house when he was stationed in the Congo after King Leopold II of Belgium seized the Congo in the 1880s (Hochschild 1998: 145)⁹. Hodgins's image is one of similar haunting horror. Ubu (a white figure in military garb) playfully tosses human skulls into a circle inscribed with a cross. The circle and cross is the same symbol of brutal interrogation seen in *Ubu Interrogator II* and clearly refers to the same thing in this image. Ubu is watched by a black general who also holds a skull, appearing to be waiting his turn in the game (see Fig. 3.14).

The Tyrant in his Shirt Sleeves (1993) and *A Wicked Man Sumptuously Attired* (1996) (see Fig. 3.15) are prime examples of the archetypal "flabby evil man" (Becker 2002: 37). The former is made all the more horrific by the title, *The Tyrant in his Shirt Sleeves*, evoking a man away from the office, relaxed and at home. This casualness is contrasted with the vivid, red paint saturating the canvas like blood, as well as the drips of red paint which appear to come from bullet hole-like marks in the canvas. The tyrant's face is grotesquely rendered, similar to the comic horror of George Grosz's portraits of corrupt officials of the 1920s Weimar Republic. The latter is also reminiscent of Grosz's imagery — in particular his imagery of corpulent Weimar Republic businessmen. In *A Wicked Man Sumptuously Attired* (1996), the face is a distorted blur, whereas the (Soho Eckstein-like) suit becomes an emblem of corrupt power, dominating the entire canvas.

⁹ Leopold II famously plundered the Congo of its rubber and was guilty of genocide on a mass scale. Ten million Congolese died at the hands of Leopold's forces (Hochschild 1998: 223).

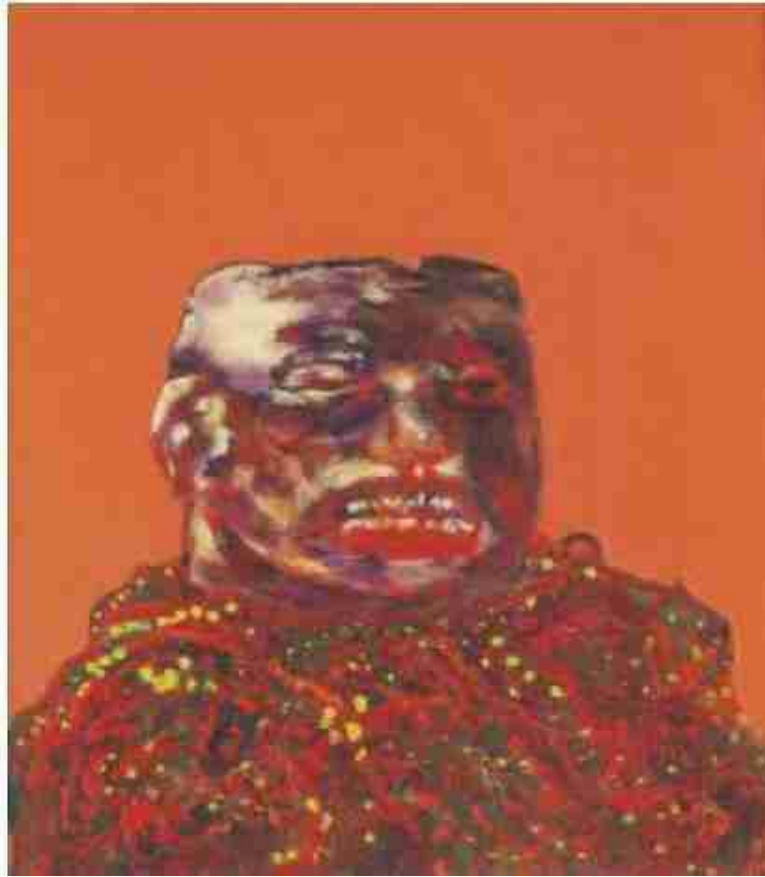


Figure 3.15Hodgins, R. 1996.A Wicked Man Sumptuously Attired
(<http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539/11071/Nathan%20Jansen%20van%20Vuuren%20Thesis.pdf?sequence=2>)

As mentioned earlier this image partly inspired my approach to the animated portraits at the end of my film (see Fig. 4.60). While my various formal and stylistic approaches were also influenced by those of Caroline Leaf, Joan Gratz and Francis Bacon (who I discuss in Chapter Four), I was inspired by Hodgins's painterly facial distortions. As I have said, my approach is generally more representational than Hodgins's; however, I have a fascination with his expressive, sometimes grotesque distortions. I realised that by using a process of metamorphosis to transition from the portrait of one head of state to the next, similar distortions to those of Hodgins's would naturally occur 'between' each painted portrait (the nature of these distortions can be seen in transition from the portrait of BJ Vorster to PW Botha in Fig. 4.60).

3.2.4 'Big Man' images of Jacob Zuma: Brett Murray, Ayanda Mabulu and Jonathan Zapiro

As well as drawing on Kentridge and Hodgins's exploration of an archetypal 'Big Man', I have also taken note of the work of particular contemporary South African artists who have taken a more specific approach in their representation of the same theme: Brett Murray, Ayanda Mabulu and Jonathan Shapiro. By 'specific', I mean in terms of their portrayal of a particular individual rather than an archetype — in this case the current President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma. Similarly, my research also deals with the specific, in the portrayal of BJ Vorster. I have been following the work of these artists with interest (both during and subsequent to my research), in particular their related controversial images of Zuma. All three of these artists have come under fire from both Zuma and the ruling ANC for their provocative images of Zuma with his genitals exposed — each artist using this iconography as a metaphor denoting what they perceive to be his corrupt leadership (Navasky 2013: 191). The most obvious affinity between my exploration and that of these artists is the portrayal of Zuma as a 'Big Man'. As mentioned, Zuma features at the end of my film as a 'Big Man' successor to Vorster. Another link to my film is that I too show a state leader with his genitalia exposed. My initial exploration of Vorster naked with his genitals exposed, however, was done in 2010 before Murray's controversial 2012 painting and without an awareness of Mabulu's work on this subject. As discussed later on in this chapter, my early investigation of this idea (as seen in Fig. 3.44) was determined by Blake's *Nebuchadnezzar* images of the naked biblical king. The further portrayal of Vorster urinating (with his genitals exposed) also emerged from my initial pre-production research in 2010 (see Fig. 4.57). I did not articulate my portrayal of Vorster naked in the same way as these artists. The intention was to show Vorster (as the Nebuchadnezzar character) in an abject and demeaned state, and while such a portrayal does relate to the portrayal of Zuma by Mabulu, Murray and Zapiro, the motivation was to illustrate the biblical narrative. Nonetheless, I was aware of the somewhat provocative and compromising nature of such a portrayal of a previous South African head of state. The reaction to Mabulu's, Murray's and Zapiro's images from the ruling party and its leadership also relates to the 'Big Man' theme of my research in that the various attempts by Zuma and the ANC to censor and prosecute these artists have been perceived as a threat to democracy in South Africa and as a sign of the President's increasing 'Big Man' status.

All three of these artists have vigorously defended their various depictions of Jacob Zuma and deny that their portrayal of his nakedness represents “an affront to black South African’s sense of dignity” (Navasky 2013: 183). Nonetheless, that some black (and white) South Africans have felt profoundly insulted by the way in which the President has been portrayed by these artists needs to be seen in the historical context of South Africa’s apartheid history. In this regard, Victor Navasky in his book *The art of controversy: Political cartoons and their enduring power* (2013) refers to an article written by S’thembiso Msomi, the political editor of the *Sunday Times*, wherein he recalls “how black people had been stripped naked by white overlords, and how workers of his father’s generation were compelled to expose their genitals in public”, which apparently indicated their state of health and potential for work (2013: 183). While Navasky concurs that these images have raised the sensitive and complex issues of reconciling the conflicting tensions between the notions of “freedom of expression and human dignity”, he shares the view espoused by journalist Mark Gevisser:

Wouldn’t it be great if Jacob Zuma and his mandarins wore the vestments of their very real power with confidence and responsibility, rather than claiming that they have been stripped naked by a white man’s paintbrush and then seeking to clothe themselves in the revolutionary garb of the street? No wonder some artists succumb to the temptation of drawing our new emperors with no clothes. (Navasky 2013: 194)



Figure 3.16 Ivanov, V. 1967. *Lenin Lived, Lenin is alive, Lenin Will Live* (<http://soviet-art.ru/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Lenin-lived-Lenin-lives-Lenin-will-live.jpg>)

While Mabulu had in fact exhibited a painting two years previously showing the President's exposed genitalia, the controversy over such a depiction of the President began fully in 2012 in Johannesburg when the politically provocative Murray exhibited a work depicting Jacob Zuma, called *The Spear*, as part of an exhibition he titled *Hail to the Thief*. *The Spear* is based on the 1967 propaganda poster by Viktor Ivanov of Vladimir Lenin showing the former Bolshevik leader confidently looking into the distance and inscribed with the legend "Lenin lived, Lenin is alive, Lenin will live" (see Fig. 3.16).

Murray's work shows Jacob Zuma in the same triumphant stance, rendered after the style of Soviet propaganda posters, except in Murray's version Zuma's trouser zip is undone and his genitalia are exposed. This image sparked a national debate and outcry when on 13 May 2012; the *City Press* newspaper published a review of Murray's exhibition and included an image of *The Spear* (Fig. 3.17). On 17 May the ANC publicly objected to the image,

demanding that it be removed from the gallery wall and that the image published in the *City Press* be removed from its website on the grounds that it violated the President's individual rights and his dignity. The Democratic Alliance (an opposition party to the ruling ANC) followed with a press release stating that *The Spear* was "brilliant as a work of political satire", implying that Zuma had brought such an image upon himself due to his promiscuous past, which included an alleged rape (Merrill & Hoffman 2015: 55). The ANC's attempted censoring of the image was also seen as against the constitutional principles wherein artists' rights to freedom of expression are protected. Anton Harber, chair of the Freedom of Expression Institute, responded by writing:

The work is one of a number in Murray's exhibition which collectively make a strong protest against corruption, greed, nepotism and other issues of governance. It is a strong intervention, and I can see no reason why Murray should be bound by the ANC's notion of good taste or acceptability. Our Constitution protects our artists' rights to be rude, mocking, even disrespectful, and we should enjoy and appreciate that, even when it makes us uncomfortable. Or maybe especially when it makes us uncomfortable, as this is what we expect from our artists. (Brooks Spector 2012)

A counter argument was that the image was an evocation of racist stereotyping and that it represented the historically problematic depictions of black people. Comparisons were made with Saartjie Baartman (Sarah Bartman) who, due to her large buttocks, was exhibited as a 'freak show' attraction in 19th century Europe and was subject to dehumanising, racist stereotyping. That Jacob Zuma (and by association all black people) was being subject to the same humiliation was a view supported by some commentators and members of the public (Merrill & Hoffman 2015: 57), to the extent that the image was defaced, first by Barend le Grange (a 58-year-old businessman), who painted a red cross over Jacob Zuma's genitals, and then by Louis Mobokela (a 25-year-old taxi driver), who smeared black paint over the image. The controversy thus went beyond a satirical comment on the President's alleged sexual misconduct and the question of his own degradation, to involve the "colonialist defamation of all black people" (Freedberg 2012: 38). A number of commentators, however, argued that Zuma is no Saartjie Baartman. She was a slave and a helpless victim, whereas Zuma is a highly controversial and powerful leader. The artist's intention to represent a satirical portrait of a corrupt and powerful 'Big Man' and the party

he represents, is emphasised both in the title of the painting, *The Spear*, which refers to the name of the military wing of the ANC, Mkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) and in the name of the exhibition, *Hail to the Thief*. Freedberg writes: “This title was a clear reference to the widespread perception of corruption in the government and at the highest levels of the ANC” (2012: 37).



Figure 3.17 Murray, B. 2012. *The Spear*
(https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/5/59/The_Spear_-_a_portrait_of_Jacob_Zuma,_by_Brett_Murray.jpg)



Figure 3.18 Murray, B. 2015. *All Dressed up and Nowhere to Go* (<http://www.goodman-gallery.com/files/upload/inventory/29664Inventory29764-1020.jpg>)

Since painting *The Spear*, Murray has produced some notable archetypal ‘Big Man’ images very much within the tradition of Robert Hodgins. These images are not of Jacob Zuma and refer only indirectly to the current dispensation in South Africa. *All Dressed up and Nowhere to Go* (2015) (a variant of a print from 1995), for example, shows a Jean-Bedel Bokassa-like state portrait of a figure in a military jacket adorned with an absurd collection of medals, stripes and insignia (see Fig. 3.18), and *The Land of the Blind ...* (2015) is unmistakably based on Mobutu Sese Seko, with his trademark leopard skin toque, cravat and thick-rimmed glasses represented. In this case Murray has portrayed the face with one centered eye and has rendered the glasses with just one lens, obviously alluding to the title of the work (see Fig. 3.19).

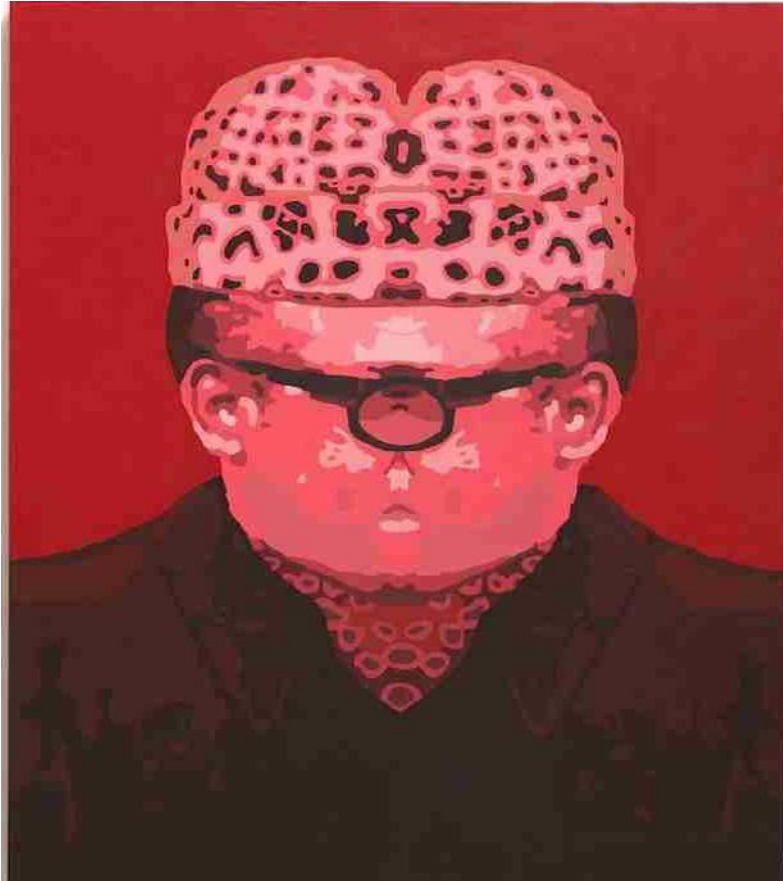


Figure 3.19 Murray, B. 2015. *The Land of the Blind ...* (<http://www.ia-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/a7/f8/77/a7f8775820d777c912ccba076513016f.jpg>)

Interestingly, Murray is not the first artist to depict Jacob Zuma in his position as head of state with his genitals exposed. As mentioned, two years before Murray exhibited *The Spear*, South African artist Ayanda Mabulu produced his own controversial painting *Ngcono ihlwempu kunesibhanxa sesityebi* (*Better poor than a rich puppet*) (2010), featuring Zuma shown as a 'Big Yes Man', reduced to a puppet, compromised by his acquiescence to Western powers. His penis here is supported by a crutch, implying, according to Mabulu, that his sexual exploits are immoral and "out of control" (Jolly 2010:8). This image also features Barack Obama, Robert Mugabe, PW Botha, Nelson Mandela, George Bush, Pope Benedict XVI and Bishop Tutu seated around a table after Leonardo Da Vinci's *The Last Supper* (see Fig. 3.20). Around Jacob Zuma the satirical narrative is played out: George Bush appears to be garroting an elderly Mandela, Obama is ironing his tongue, PW Both is pointing his infamous finger and Archbishop Desmond Tutu is lying naked on the Pope's lap. This work did generate some controversy and the governing ANC party lodged an objection to the image when it was exhibited in 2010.

But no action was taken against the artist. However, public and media interest in this work was renewed in the wake of the outcry over Murray's *The Spear*. Mabulu portrays Jacob Zuma wearing a skin that is part wolf, part sheep, and sporting a prosthetic arm with which he pierces his heart. Mabulu stated that the image of Zuma and the painting as a whole represents the hypocrisy of South African leaders, the culture of self-enrichment and the neglect of the poor, saying that he will continue to paint provocative images such as this until his people "who live in s**t are no longer suffering and democracy is replaced by freedom" (Jolly 2010:8).



Figure 3.20 Mabulu, A. 2010. *Ngcono ihlwempu kunesibhanxa sesityebi (Better poor than a rich puppet)* (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/d/d6/Ngcono_ihlwempu_kunesibhanxo_sesityebi_%28painting%29.jpg)

In 2012 Mabulu exhibited another controversial painting of Jacob Zuma titled *Mshini Wam (Weapon of Mass Destruction)* (see Fig. 3.21). This image shows the South African President in traditional Zulu garb, in a Zulu dancing pose, this time with both his anus and genitalia exposed. While this painting did not cause the same political outcry and legal battle as Murray's *The Spear*, ANC spokesman Keith Khoza categorically affirmed the party's unequivocal condemnation, claiming that: "[a]ny portrayal of President Zuma in

this way is disrespectful. It makes a mockery of the President's office, his status as a father and a husband, and is an absolute abuse of the arts" (Knoetze 2012). Mabulu responded by saying:

He is not naked; I did not paint him with an uncircumcised penis. This is a metaphor that shows he is not a boy; he is a man, an elder, a father, a leader [...] In this painting I'm engaging my elder in the language of my mother tongue, the language that carries the culture of my people, the language he understands the most [...] Through this painting, I respectfully, as one of his children, ask my father why he is starving us. Why he is neglecting his duties to his children, the citizens of South Africa. (Knoetze2012)



Figure 3.21Mabulu, A. 2012.Mshini Wam (Weapon of Mass Destruction)
(<http://cdn.mg.co.za/content/documents/2012/08/28/Umshini-Wam-%28Weapon-of-Mass-Destruction%29.jpg>)



Figure 3.22Mabulu, A. 2015.*Spear Down my Throat (The Pornography of Power)* (<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/564x/fd/74/17/fd74174c477236ac0d8be4de6c38d703.jpg>)

In 2015 Mabulu presented a further provocative work depicting the South African President called *Spear Down my Throat (The Pornography of Power)* (see Fig. 3.22). This time he is semi-clad in traditional skins with his trousers around his ankles and his penis down the throat of a naked black woman who is being penetrated from behind by a figure in Victorian garb with a hyena's head. At the same time the woman's breasts are also being milked into an urn marked with the ANC emblem. In the background is a reproduction of the newspaper headlines following the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960. Mabulu equates this apartheid era tragedy to the gunning down in 2012 by the South

African Police Force of striking Marikana miners, where 34 miners were killed. Mabulu blamed this incident on the South African leadership, which he claimed was sanctioned by leaders with an “apartheidsmentaliteit” (apartheid mentality) of oppression. This image appears to directly reference Murray’s *The Spear* — both in title and image. Predictably this image sparked outrage and condemnation from the ruling ANC and resulted in the African National Congress Women’s League (ANCWL) marching to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to present a memorandum to the ANC which condemned the painting on the grounds that it was disrespectful to the President. Mabulu dismissed the ANCWL allegations, claiming that their march to defend the dignity of one man represented their failure to respect and uphold the dignity of many women (and people in general) who have suffered under the ANC’s leadership. Mabulu explains that the woman in his work represents the country (South Africa) and the hardships its people have had to endure under the current dispensation. He is quoted as saying:

We are being milked dry, and you can imagine the torment involved when a dick is forcefully plunged into your throat, and at the same time you are being lynched. Then behind you is the hyena/colonial master, who is fucking you from behind while your breasts are being milked. How can you reconcile this type of existence with this so-called democracy? The life of a black man is sad, it is hell. And even worse is that the architects of this hell are our leaders. (Nkuna 2015)

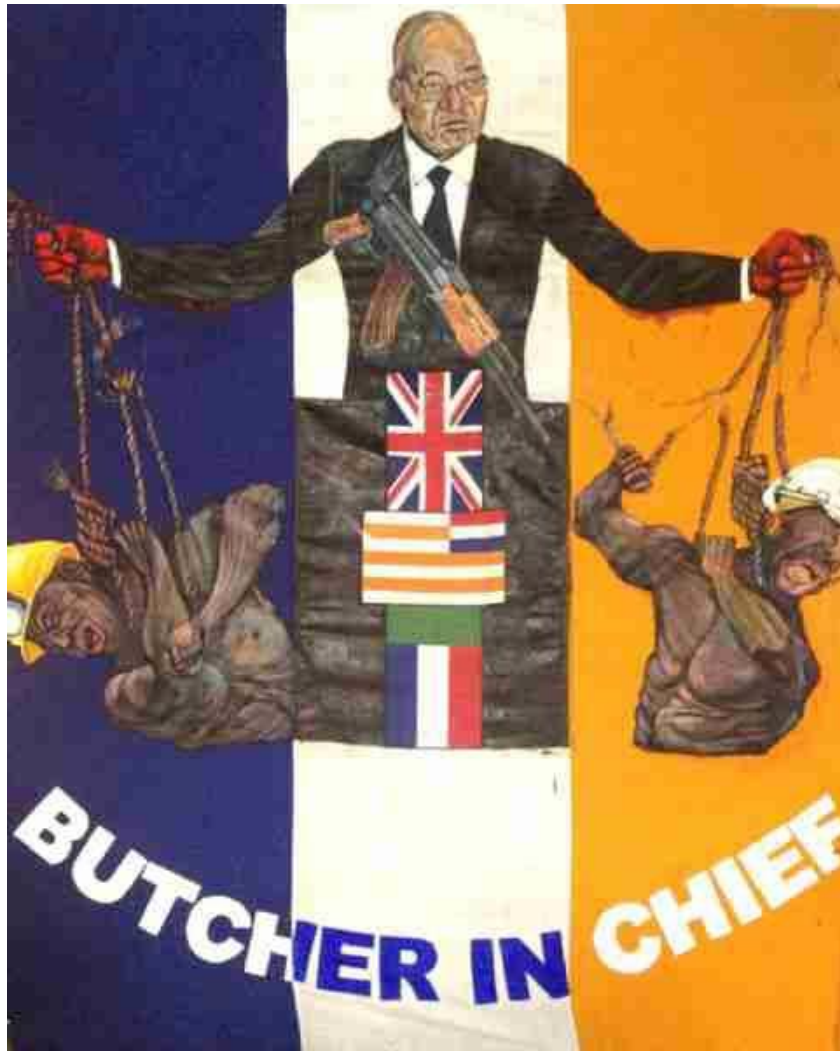


Figure 3.23Mabulu, A. 2013. *Butcher-in-Chief*
(http://www.worldart.co.za/images/work/1423045176_big.jpg)

Mabulu continues to paint vociferous images of the South African President, all of them questioning the President's, and by association the ANC's, leadership. While Mabulu is a self-taught artist who may not be aware of the theoretical and historical discourse surrounding the notion and portrayal of the 'Big Man', he certainly shows an awareness of the iconography of power and its abuse. An image by Mabulu that does not have as much exposure as *Ngcono ihlwempu kunesibhanxa sesityebi* (*Better poor than a rich puppet*) (2010), *Mshini Wam* (*Weapon of Mass Destruction*) (2012) and *Spear Down my Throat* (*The Pornography of Power*) (2015), possibly because it does not show Jacob Zuma naked, is *Butcher-in-Chief* (2013) (see Fig. 3.23). I find this image interesting in its allegiance to Hodgins's 'Big Man' imagery, in particular his exploration of the state portrait and posed media photograph format [as seen in Hodgins's *A Wicked Man*

Sumptuously Attired (1996) and his *Ubu and the Commanders-in-Chief* (1981/82)]. *Butcher-in-Chief* (2013) clearly refers to the Marikana massacre and Mabulu's belief that the ANC was implicated in sanctioning the police's opening fire on the striking miners. The image shows the frontal torso of Jacob Zuma formally attired in a suit and tie. In each hand, which is painted red and appears to be dripping with blood, he holds the rope of a noose which is around the neck of a miner. Both miners appear to be dying as they struggle to free themselves from the ropes. The image is painted on an original apartheid-era South African flag. In front of Zuma, Mabulu has painted three more flags, all representing the colonial past: the flag of the South African Republic, which was used until 1902 and represented the Voortrekker territories north of the Vaal river; the official flag of the Orange Free State, which was also used until 1902; and the Union Jack, which obviously represents the British colonisers. An AK-47 is also present in the foreground, crossing Zuma's torso and aimed at the head of one of the miners. *Butcher-in-Chief* seems to be an amalgamation of the format of an official state portrait and an election poster, as at the bottom of the image the slogan "Butcher in Chief" is inscribed in bold letters. This image contains much of the symbolic and personalised iconography of power of Mabulu's many portrayals of Zuma, all pointing to corruption, human rights abuse, and the repetition of historical abuse and the "apartheidsmentaliteit" of the current South African leadership.

In July 2016, Mabulu came under fire for two works exhibited at Constitution Hill in Cape Town. Ironically this is home to the Constitutional Court and is also symbolically dedicated to human rights and South Africa's post-apartheid constitutional democracy. The mission statement on the website for Constitution Hill describes the site as "a beacon for Constitutionalism, Human Rights and Democracy" (Constitution Hill 2013). Mabulu's artworks form part of the site's *Post Its* exhibition, which according to the exhibition's curator, Asanda Madosi, includes the work of artists who "contest and trouble the notion that the South African present is a radical break with the past". Mabulu's works on the exhibitions are titled *Ingwe ayizidli ngamabala isakuluma ikaka okweSihlunu senyama, ayityiwa ikaka noba ungalamba ungapabha (Prostitutes)* (2016) (see Fig. 3. 24), and *Isifebe asilele sitshela kwisende le'engcinizelo (Impotent)* (2016) (see Fig. 3.25). The former shows President Jacob Zuma engaged in sexual intercourse with Atul Gupta in the cockpit of the Guptas' personal jet. The painting also includes an ANC flag draped over part of the cockpit's interior. (The Guptas are a wealthy South African Indian family who

have a controversially close relationship with the President, and who also are believed to exert an unhealthy and illegitimate influence on the ruling ANC party). According to Mabulu, *Ingwe ayizidli ngamabala isakuluma ikaka okweSihlunu senyama, ayityiwa ikaka noba ungalamba ungagabha (Prostitutes)* shows that “the Gupta family is at the center of state capture and that Zuma is the person who is going out of his way to please them. Our country’s well-being is deteriorating and the work is just presenting our leadership in its natural form; naked for all to see” (Culture Reporter 2016). The latter image shows the President slumped, asleep on a gilded throne, semi-naked, again with his genitals exposed. Lying discarded at his feet are a half-eaten serving of McDonald’s chips, a woman’s underwear, a stiletto shoe, an empty condom packet and what appears to be a book on the Constitution. The President is flanked by two black youths in what look like matador outfits. The throne is topped with the head of a goat — a common sacrificial animal in Zulu culture. While stylistically different, this image echoes Hodgins’s vociferous portrayals of the African ‘Big Man’ as morally corrupt and controlled by outside Western and other influences. These latest two controversial images by Mabulu show that he is fast emerging as a new voice (one that represents the disenfranchised poor) against the perceived abuse of power associated with the Presidency.



Figure 3.24Mabulu, A. 2016.*Ingwe ayizidli ngamabala isakuluma ikaka okweSihlunu senyama, ayityiwa ikaka noba ungalamba ungagabha (Prostitutes)*, (<http://www.culture-review.co.za/images/stateCapture1.JPG>)



Figure 3.25 Mabulu, A. 2016. *Isifebe asilele sitshele kwisende le'engcinizelo (Impotent)* (https://4.bp.blogspot.com/-ZPXVfGq8YPY/V4VgnhrLKsI/AAAAAAAAArck/Nmw_ZaOuAFQ-4BU7P_Cdwj64M8dBdtK9wCLcB/s1600/stateCapture.JPG)

South Africa's prominent political cartoonist Jonathan Shapiro, or "Zapiro" as he is more famously known and signs his cartoons, is possibly the most prolific and arguably the most controversial critic and commentator of the ANC and its leadership under Jacob Zuma. Zapiro has been the editorial cartoonist for the South African *Mail and Guardian* newspaper since 1994 and has over years come under fire from the ANC and its leadership for his provocative political cartoons, in particular his cartoons of Jacob Zuma, which explore various issues (including recurring allegations of sexual misconduct, corruption and nepotism) that both highlight Zuma's 'Big Man' status and question his

suitability for his position. Before this discussion focuses on some of these images, I would like to discuss Zapiro's high-profile support of both Murray's *The Spear* and Mabulu's *Spear Down my Throat (The Pornography of Power)*.

In relation to the exploration of the central theme of this project, it is important to consider the cartoons that Zapiro published in support of Mabulu's and Murray's images and in response to the President's and the ANC's reaction to their works, as his cartoons challenge what he perceives to be the President's and the ruling party's attempts to censor artists and shut down freedom of speech. To Zapiro, such actions are characteristic of the ruling parties of a "banana republic" (a term that usually refers to the politics of Latin America, but has come to be associated with politically unstable countries, typically governed by a dictator), and not of a constitutional democracy (News24 2015). Zapiro defended the vitriol expressed by Mabulu's image and Mabulu's right to represent the President of the country in a way that compromises his dignity, especially if it is to highlight serious injustices, commenting: "I certainly think that he (Mabulu) is within his rights to do what he does and to be as angry as he is" (News24 2015). Zapiro responded to the ANCWL's march on the Union Buildings in defense of the President's dignity and in protest against Mabulu's painting with a cartoon that was published in the *Mail and Guardian* in November 2015 (see Fig. 3.26). This image shows two juxtaposed images. The first, marked "a.", shows the ANCWL marching to the Union Buildings and holding up an image of Mabulu's painting. The second, marked "b.", shows a plummeting graph of the South African government's ratings in relation to the "economy", "delivery" and "confidence". Above both these images is the caption, "Which outrageous image caused an ANC march to the Union Buildings?", clearly exposing the absurdity of the need for the ANCWL to defend Jacob Zuma's dignity when, according to Zapiro, Zuma himself has "impaired his own dignity" with "many pieces of hypocrisy", making it justified for critics such as himself, Mabulu and Murray to respond to his leadership with "very rude and searing images" (News242015).

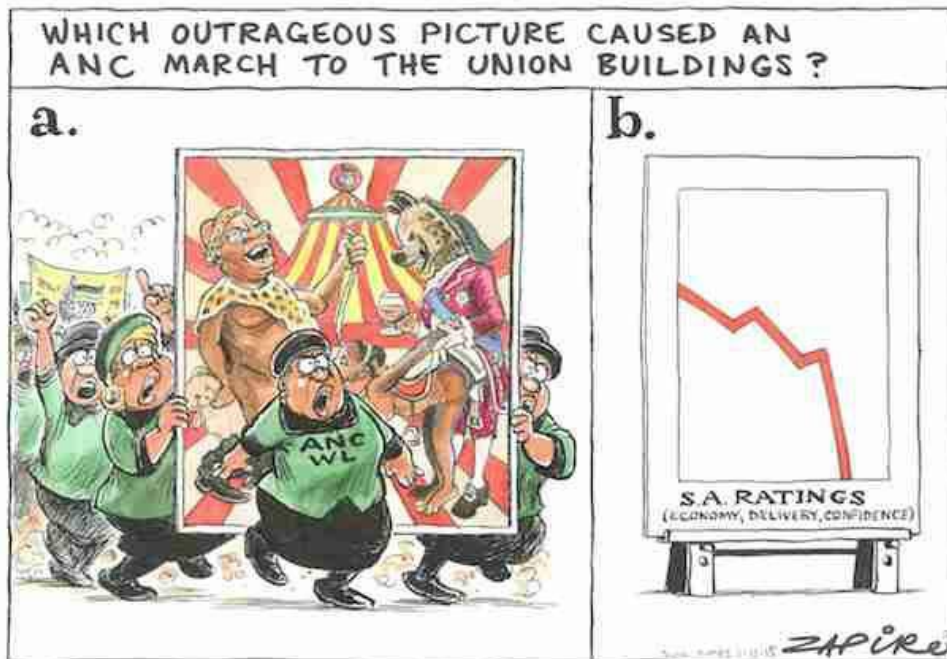


Figure 3.26 Zapiro. 2015. ANC Women's League Protesting in support of President Jacob Zuma (<https://www.zapiro.com/cartoons/151101st>)



Figure 3.27 Zapiro. 2012. With apologies to Brett Murray, No apologies to President Jacob Zuma, Want respect?... Earn it! (<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/564x/cd/e3/60/cde3609ab5830d17f0a66308e507232a.jpg>)

Zapiro also produced two controversial cartoons in defense of and in response to Murray's *The Spear*. The first is a take on Murray's painting but Jacob Zuma's penis is replaced with a shower head.¹⁰ Instead of water, spurting from the shower head are following words: "sex scandals", "nepotism", "corruption", and "cronyism". In the top right-hand corner of the image Zapiro has written: "With apology to Brett Murray, No apology to President Jacob Zuma, Want respect? ... Earn it!" (see Fig. 3.27). The second cartoon (Fig. 3.28) sparked further outrage from the ANC. This time Zapiro shows Zuma as an erect penis (with shower head) staring at himself in a mirror. Brett Murray's signature is inscribed at the bottom of the mirror and the name of the Goodman Gallery appears on a wall. Included in this cartoon is the following caption: "Though sex is his publicised sport, Jacob Zuma took the dick painting to court, Suing Brett's free expression, Confirmed the impression, He's as big a dick as we thought!"

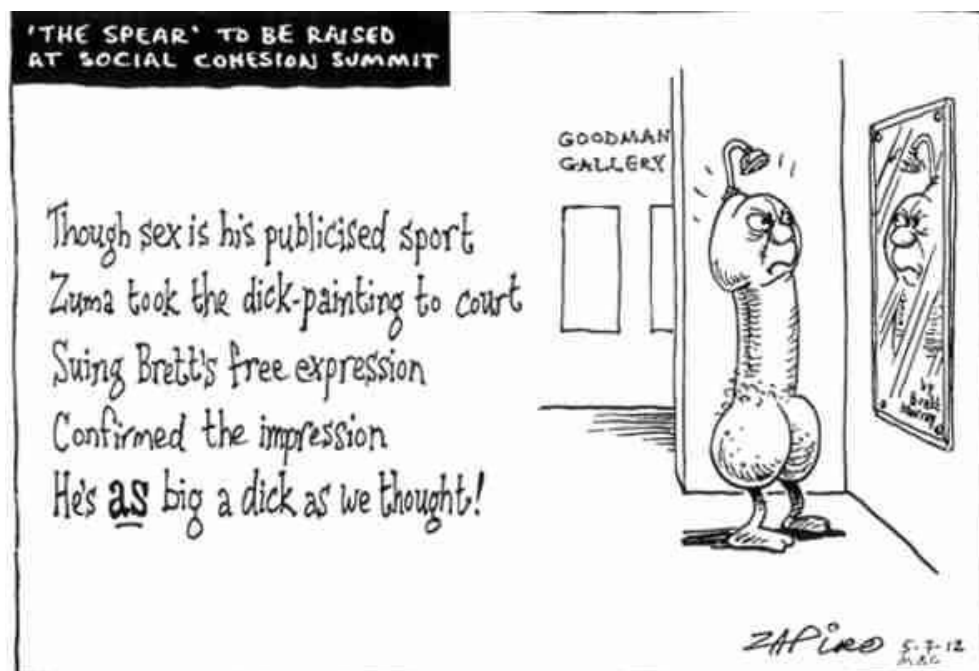


Figure 3.28Zapiro. 2012. "Though sex is his publicised sport, Jacob Zuma took the dick painting to court, Suing Brett's free expression, Confirmed the impression, He's as big a dick as we thought!" (<http://cdn.mg.co.za/crop/content/cartoons/2012/07/06/120705>)

¹⁰Zapiro first appended the shower head motif to Jacob Zuma's head after he allegedly raped the HIV-positive daughter of a prominent ANC family at his home in 2005. During the trial Zuma denied rape but admitted to having sex with the woman, after which he stated that he took a shower to reduce the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. According to Zapiro, the shower head is a constant reminder of this alleged rape and symbolises his sexual escapades and ignorance of the disease that has so ravaged his country. However, as evident in Zapiro's first response to Murray's *The Spear*, the shower head symbolism has expanded to include corruption, nepotism and cronyism.

Zapiro is arguably an artist who has, through his art, presented the most prolific, provocative and acerbic challenge on the ANC leadership under Jacob Zuma. As is the nature of Zapiro's position as a political cartoonist, his work covers many political and social agendas, both locally and internationally, but for the purpose of this discussion I shall be focusing on selected Zapiro cartoons of Zuma. Interestingly, even before Zuma became President in 2009, Zapiro had published some highly contentious images in 2006. These images questioned Zuma's morality and his suitability as both the Deputy President (the post he occupied at the time) and as the most likely candidate to replace Thabo Mbeki as the next President of the country. The first of these images relates to Zuma's rape trial in 2006, during which he stated that after having sex with his accuser he took a shower to prevent contracting HIV/AIDS from the HIV-positive woman. This statement was greeted with dismay by local and international HIV/AIDS activists, particularly in light of the fact that Zuma was head of the National AIDS Council (NAC) in 2005 (BBC News 2006). In response to Zuma's statement during his trial, Zapiro published some cartoons. One showed Zuma in the shower trying to wash away his embarrassing and revealing statement as to why he took a shower (see Fig. 3.29). The other meanwhile shows for the first time the shower head appended to the top of Jacob Zuma's head, spurting water which is washing away the following words on a piece of paper he is holding: "Abstain", "Be faithful", "Condomise" (see Fig. 3.30). While the shower head at this time symbolised the alleged rape and a condemnation of his ignorance (as both a powerful member of the ANC and as a previous head of the NAC) of how HIV/AIDS is contracted, over the years it has, in Zapiro's cartoons, come to represent all that he perceives is wrong with the Presidency. So for Zapiro, while the shower head remains a reminder of the President's sexual indiscretion and ignorance of HIV/AIDS, he has expanded its symbolism to include corruption, nepotism, cronyism (as is seen in his first cartoon he made in defense of *The Spear*), human rights abuse and police violence — all qualities associated with 'Big Man' rule. The shower head made a brief disappearance 2009. Zapiro explained at the time

I thought I will take stock of where we are and give the presidency a chance to get going [...] Despite my misgivings about Zuma and despite my belief that it was wrong for the ANC [African National Congress] to have him as its Presidential candidate, we all have to take stock of the reality that he is President of the country. (BBC News 2009)

So for a short while the shower head hovered above the President's head with the label "temporary suspension" attached to it. Another cartoon from around this time shows the President trying to prise it off with various tools. Zapiro offers a solution in this work in a list of suggestions as to how to remove a shower head, the last being "try to be truly Presidential and maybe it will fall off". However, soon after this Zuma made some controversial, nepotistic government appointments and Zapiro reattached the shower head, where it has remained ever since.



Figure 3.29Zapiro. 2006. "I took a shower to minimise the risk."(https://loveworldnewsagencyblog.files.wordpress.com/2009/04/stain_remover.gif)



Figure 3.30Zapiro. 2006. “Abstain, Be Faithful, Condomise.”(<https://www.opinion-internationale.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ZumaShower-Zapiro.jpg>)

Another contentious Zapiro cartoon depicting Jacob Zuma, which again engendered the President’s wrath, was titled *Lady Justice* and was published in the *Sunday Times* in September 2008. The cartoon shows the President unbuckling his belt, standing in front of a woman who is being forcibly held down by leaders of the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP), the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). In the image Zapiro has Gwede Mantashe, the Secretary-General of the ANC, one of the people featured holding down the woman, saying to Zuma, “Go for it, Boss!” (see Fig. 3.31). Zapiro defended his image, claiming that it was never intended as a personal attack on individuals but rather as a criticism of the fact that the ANC, the ANCYL, the SACP and Cosatu were putting their allegiance to Zuma above their allegiance to the criminal justice system. Referring to the charges of corruption Zuma was facing at the time, Zapiro claimed it was “common knowledge” that Zuma and his allies were pushing for a political rather than a legal solution to the corruption charges. Zuma’s attempts to squash the charges and claims by Zuma’s allies that the charges were part of a political smear campaign were, according to Zapiro, in violation of the criminal justice system and the Constitution. He further explained that his personification of justice was in line with the classical tradition of portraying the justice system as a blindfolded woman with scales. He posited that a violation of an institution is formally described (in

the Oxford Dictionary) as “the rape of institutions” — thus his image of Zuma about to rape the personification of justice refers to Zuma’s violation of the criminal justice system. Zapiro is quoted as saying: “There are layers in this cartoon. The primary point is that Zuma is violating the justice system and the spirit of the Constitution. That violation is depicted as a rape” (Van Hoorn 2008). In spite of this explanation this cartoon, according to Zapiro, had to date caused the swiftest and largest reaction from the ruling ANC and its allies. Cosatu demanded a formal apology from the *Sunday Times*, the ANC called for the editor of the newspaper, Mondli Makhanya, to resign, and Julius Malema (the leader of the ANCYL) threatened to kill for the President if the corruption charges went through¹¹.



Figure 3.31Zapiro. Lady Justice. 2008(<http://cdn.mg.co.za/content/documents/2012/10/24/zapiro.jpg>)

As with a number of the cartoons Zapiro has published depicting Jacob Zuma (including

¹¹Zapiro commented on Malema’s statement at this time which he interpreted as a direct threat to himself, and noted with amusement and irony that since Malema is now Commander-in-Chief of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and in direct opposition to Jacob Zuma and the ANC, he has popularized the shower head hand signal—by employing it to publicly insult the President (Underhill 2012).

all of the images discussed here), the President mounted a lawsuit against Zapiro. This began a four-year saga, in the course of which the President initially claimed R5 million in damages, then reduced the amount to R4 million, then R1 million, then R100 000 and an apology, before dropping the charges completely in 2012. Zapiro and others believe that the President's habit of suing the media (between 2006 and 2010, Jacob Zuma launched 15 charges against the media for criticizing his behavior) is a threat to democracy and freedom of speech. Ironically Zapiro, who describes himself as an "anti-apartheid activist" (Dixon 2008), also came under fire from the ruling National Party during the apartheid era. While Zapiro was never sued for his cartoons during the apartheid era, he was threatened and arrested in 1989 for his satirical images of the Security Police as pigs wielding guns. He was subsequently detained for some time in Pollsmoor prison, during which he underwent intensive interrogation by the Security Police. Describing one of his interrogations, Zapiro says: "One of the officers asked me why I depicted policemen as pigs. I told him I drew what I saw" (Nieuwoudt 2012). Thus Zapiro has likened the Presidency's reaction and action against his cartoons to the strict censorship laws and complete shutdown of freedom of speech of the apartheid era National Party (Underhill 2012). Zapiro's images of Jacob Zuma ultimately challenge his suitability to be President of a constitutional democracy by highlighting his (and the ruling ANC party's) particularly undemocratic approach to governance. In this case, almost all of Zapiro's images of Jacob Zuma can be read as portraits of a 'Big Man' or images about 'Big Man'-type rule. One can single out imagery in which Zuma's 'Big Man' status is more firmly entrenched with visual references to 'Big Man' rule. For example, Zapiro's series of cartoons showing the President naked and wearing a crown (from which the shower head protrudes) visually allude to Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale *The Emperor's New Clothes*, which tells the story of an Emperor who is too obsessed with elaborate clothing to be worried about ruling his country (see Fig. 3.32). However, it is the symbolism of the showerhead which has come to encompass all that Zapiro sees wrong with the presidency, traits which are also synonymous with the notion of the 'Big Man'.



Figure 3.32 Zapiro. 2014 (<http://thisisafrica.me/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2014/05/New-Age-remarks-on-Zumas-clothes-as-Outfit-stunning.jpg>)

3.3 The influence of Francis Bacon's 'Papal Series' and William Blake's 'Nebuchadnezzar' engravings on the 'Big Man' theme of the film

The portrayal of BJ Vorster (as Nebuchadnezzar) in the wilderness was significantly influenced by the 18th-century artist William Blake's series of four engravings titled *Nebuchadnezzar* (1795) and the 20th-century artist Francis Bacon's series of Papal paintings, which were themselves made in response to the Spanish Baroque painter Diego Rodriguez de Silveira Velázquez's *Portrait of Innocent X* (1650). While both Blake's and Bacon's images portray powerful figures, they simultaneously evoke these figures in a fallen or abject state. It was this aspect of these images that informed the visual portrayal of Vorster in the role of Nebuchadnezzar when he is banished to the wilderness. These images by Blake and Bacon are contrary to the portraits of historically powerful leaders in Western art that are typically represented in the heroic manner propagated by the tradition of academic art (as represented by the Baroque and Neoclassical periods). These images traditionally show the powerful individual idealised and stripped of humanity, while their near-divine dominance and power over the audience are asserted in various ways. This heroic portrayal of power is exemplified by *Napoleon I on his Imperial Throne* (1806) by the French Neoclassical painter Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (Fig. 3.33).

In his analysis of *Napoleon I on his Imperial Throne*, author and art critic Michael

Glover, posits:

Everything seems to have been contrived — and this painting is, at the very least, a massively staged contrivance — to rob him of his humanness, to transform him into a thing that transcends every idea of the merely human. This is a deathless man, one who has risen above us in order to utterly dominate our thinking, rule our lives. (Glover 2012np)

Glover's description of this image has some affinity with the famous 'Great Man' theory espoused by Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle's 'Great Man' theory, articulated in his book *On heroes, hero-worship, and the heroic in history* (2012[1841]), posits that history can be understood through the impact of powerful individuals with particular wisdom, political, social or religious standing. Central to his theory is his conceptualisation of the 'Great Man' as an ideal to strive for. He is

the Ablest Man; he means also the truest-hearted, justest, the Noblest Man: what he tells us to do must be precisely the wisest, fittest, that we could anywhere or anyhow learn;--the thing which it will in all ways behoove US, with right loyal thankfulness and nothing doubting, to do! Our doing and life were then, so far as government could regulate it, well regulated; that were the ideal of constitutions. (Carlyle 2012[1841]: 189)

Carlyle's notion of seeking the 'Ablest Man' upholds individuals such as Oliver Cromwell and Napoleon Bonaparte as exemplars of the 'Ablest Man'—Great Men who through the force of their intellect, personalities and ambition shaped history¹². Carlyle exalts Cromwell's leadership and sees him as an unsung hero of liberty and a personification of his idea of the 'Ablest Man'. Likewise, Carlyle "could not accept that Napoleon was less than divine" (Cameron & Dombowsky 2008: 354), even though he later acknowledges Napoleon's fallibility, saying "poor Napoleon: a great implement too soon wasted, til it was useless: our last Great man" (Carlyle 2012[1841]: 234). Yet

¹² The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, like Carlyle, also spoke of the need for great individuals. However, he criticises Carlyle's association of the hero/genius with the divine, claiming that Carlyle invented a religious type of hero worship "which views the 'hero' as a demi-god and then is pained when it discovers that its 'hero' is human" (Siemens & Roodt 2008: 354). Interestingly, like Carlyle, Nietzsche also uses Napoleon as an example of an exemplary individual or 'Higher Man' as a political leader: "He uses the public arena as the medium on which he practices his art. In doing so he presents himself as an exemplar of humanity, inspiring others to seek their own path to excellence". However, unlike Carlyle, he acknowledges Napoleon's corruption and fallibility, warning that even the "mightiest individual is fragile" (Glenn 2001: 129).

according to other commentators and leaders, such as Sir Winston Churchill, Cromwell's period of rule, known as the Protectorate, was nothing more than a military dictatorship. Churchill refers to Cromwell as "a representative of dictatorship and military rule who is in lasting discord with the genius of the English race" (Churchill 2009[1956]: 314). Carlyle's identification of the hero figure with individuals who have also been associated with the less heroic notion of the dictator reveals how this concept can be tangentially related to that of the 'Big Man'. But on the whole his conception of the 'Great Man' was clearly never intended to incorporate this negative aspect. Thus, while it is useful to contextualize Carlyle's 'Great Man' theory against that of the 'Big Man', his view is unsustainable, does not illuminate the concept of the 'Big Man' in any significant way and is thus given no further room in my project.



Figure 3.33Ingres, J. 1806. Napoleon 1 on his Imperial Throne [oil on canvas] [Online]
Available:
<http://ts1.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608004852160005190&w=116&h=151&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7>
(Accessed 4.05.2013)



Figure 3.34 Velázquez, D. 1650. *Portrait of Innocent X* [oil on canvas] [Online] Available: <http://ts3.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608042501846730823&w=119&h=149&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7> (Accessed 4. 05. 2013)

Nonetheless, there are rare exceptions (within the academic tradition) to this ‘heroic’ tradition, notably Velázquez’s *Portrait of Innocent X* (1650) (Fig. 3.34). While this image most certainly depicts a man of unshakable authority, it is not an idealised or heroic portrait. Innocent X was widely disliked and was distinguished by his harsh austerity and physical ugliness. The 15th-century chronicler Giacinto Gigli describes Pope Innocent X: “He was tall in stature, thin, choleric, splenetic, with a red face, bald in front with thick eyebrows bent above the nose, which revealed his severity and harshness. His face was

the most deformed ever born among men” (Collins 2005: 177). If this somewhat extreme description is true, perhaps Velázquez idealized his depiction of Pope Innocent X somewhat; nonetheless Velasquez does capture a severity and realism uncharacteristic of official Church portraits of this period and does reveal in the posture and countenance of the Pope a formidable and powerful figure. Jonathan Jones posits

He’s Innocent, but are you? An audience with this painting is a tense, claustrophobic experience. It is not so much a depiction of power as its embodiment in painting: this portrait creates a presence so fierce that the authority of the Papacy is distilled, preserved and with you as you consider your sins. It is the most acute study of personal power in the history of art. (Jones 2003: 17)

Velásquez’s *Portrait of Innocent X* informed the visual research for the BJ Vorster/Nebuchadnezzar character in the film in that while it is a powerful depiction of authority, the image simultaneously conveys the Pope’s human presence and something of his character. Velásquez does not idealise the Pope’s coarse features, and neither does he soften his expression. In creating images of Vorster in the film, I was thus conscious of exploring a similar realism. Of the many archival media images I explored of Vorster, quite a few convey a typical grim, authoritarian countenance but at the same allude to an underlying ‘humanness’, albeit a flawed one.

Possibly the most notable response to Velásquez’s *Pope Innocent X* is the 20th-century English painter Francis Bacon’s series of Papal paintings. These, of which there were more than forty-five, were mostly made after Velásquez’s painting. In many of these images Velásquez’s inscrutable and ‘dangerously’ restrained portrait is subverted into an explosive scream (Steffen2004:115). According to Steffen, Francis Bacon aimed to show the screaming mouth at “the very moment of terror” (Steffen 2004: 147). The reference for the screaming mouth of Pope Innocent X was from Sergei Eisenstein’s film *Battleship Potemkin* (1928) and, in particular, a still from the film showing a screaming, dying nurse. In this portrayal of human terror, her screaming mouth is wide open; blood pours from her right eye like tears and her glasses hang broken from her nose (see Fig. 3.35). Bacon said of this image:

And then I saw — or perhaps I even knew by then — the *Potemkin* film and I attempted to use the *Potemkin* still as a basis on which I could also use those marvelous illustrations of the human mouth. It never worked out though. [...] I did hope one day to make the best painting of the human cry. I was not able to do it, and it's much better in the Eisenstein and there it is. (Sylvester & Archimbaud 2004: 348)

As mentioned, Bacon is noted for not giving too much away regarding the meaning of his work or his motivation for drawing on specific imagery. However, the affinity between the *Battleship Potemkin* still of the dying nurse and that of Bacon's initial response to the Velásquez image in his *Study for Portrait VII* (1953) (see Fig. 3.36) is clearly the screaming human face or the "human cry" as he puts it, which Sylvester and Archimbaud, and Steffen, interpret as a visual portrayal of human terror (Sylvester & Archimbaud 2004: 348; Steffen 2004: 147). In *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1953) (see Fig. 3.37), Bacon integrated the screaming face of the nurse from *Battleship Potemkin*, to the extent that even the glasses are evident. Bacon was notoriously illusive and non-committal when it came to answering specific questions about his work. He admits to having been fascinated by the open mouth since he was a young man, having possessed from an early age a colour illustrated book of diseases of the mouth. He also alludes to having found the appearance of the mouth and teeth sexually alluring. Nonetheless, he does concede that in almost all of the open mouths in his paintings his intention was to portray a scream of terror (Sylvester & Archimbaud 2004: 348). According to Steffen, the screaming mouth for Bacon simultaneously symbolised "pain, suffering, greed and terror" (Steffen 2004:147).



Figure 3.35Eisenstein, S. 1928. *Battleship Potemkin* [digital image] [Online] Available: <http://ts2.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.607998229321613765&w=210&h=152&c=7&rs=1&pid=1> (Accessed 4.05.2013)

Gilles Deleuze, in his book *Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation* (2005), interprets the screaming mouth of Bacon's images as a "shadowy abyss" which can be equated to the certainty and invisible power of death. The knowledge of the inevitability of death is, according to Deleuze, "the power of the future" and the unseen power behind the scream: "This is what is expressed in the phrase 'to scream at' — not to scream before or about, but to scream at death, which suggests this coupling offers the perceptible force of the scream and the imperceptible force that makes one scream" (Deleuze 2005: 60–61). Deleuze goes on to contextualise this notion in terms of Bacon's *Portrait of Innocent X*: "Innocent X screams, but he screams behind the curtain, not only as someone who can no longer be seen, but as someone who cannot see, who has nothing left to see, whose only remaining function is to render visible these invisible forces that are making him scream, these powers of the future" (Deleuze 2005: 60–61).



Figure 3.36Bacon, F. 1953. Study for Portrait VII [oil on canvas] [Online] Available: <http://ts3.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608052861302342688&w=106&h=142&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7> (Accessed 4.05.2013)



Figure 3.37Bacon, F. 1953. Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X [oil on canvas] [Online] Available: <http://ts4.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608046165451866117&w=190&h=141&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7> (Accessed 4.05.2013)

It is this portrayal of the powerful figure, screaming and stripped of his restraint in Bacon's Papal series that influenced the visualisation of BJ Vorster in the wilderness toward the end of the film. This is where the figure of Vorster is completely naked and has mutated into a beast-like form. At this point in the film, the Vorster character lets out an anguished scream. Vorster's scream was animated with deliberate reference to Bacon's screaming Pope images, in particular the *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1953). The stop-motion painting of Vorster's screaming face in the film in no way presumes to equate itself with Bacon's painting, but it was certainly created with a

strong awareness of Bacon's renditions of the screaming mouth. The stop-motion scream is different from Bacon's painted screams in that it has the added dimension of time (see Fig. 3.38).

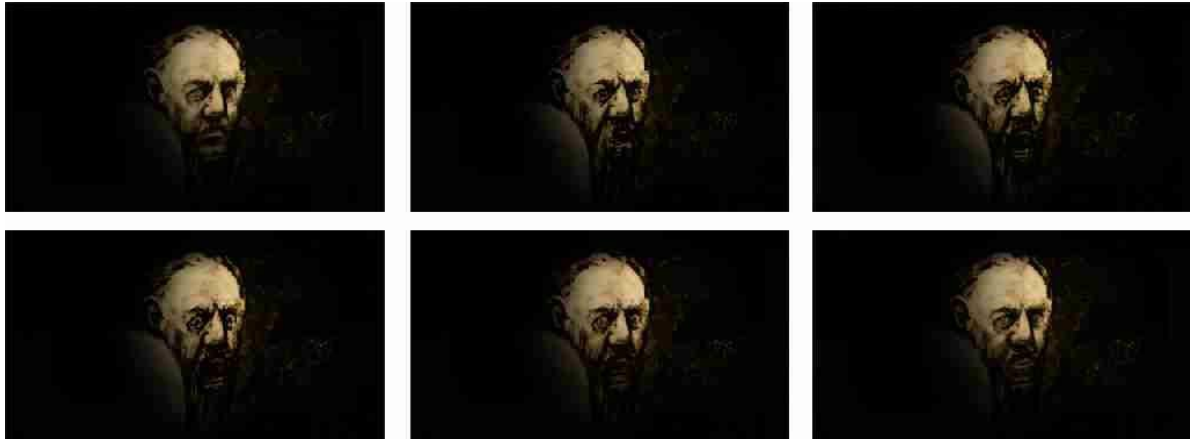


Figure 3.38 Stewart, M. 2013. Stills from *Big Man* [gauche and glycerine on glass]

Bacon incorporated the screaming mouth in other works besides the Papal portraits. In *Head 11* (1949) (see Fig. 3.39), the face is almost entirely made up of a screaming mouth, and in this case the mouth is reminiscent of the screaming or yawning jaws of a baboon. Bacon's mother lived in South Africa and he visited the country often. He is reported to have come across baboons, either in the wild or in captivity. He was apparently disturbed by the experience of seeing baboons in captivity. His *Study of a Baboon* (1944) (see Fig. 3.40) portrays a South African Chacma baboon in a tree, screaming. In Bacon's image the animal appears to be half in captivity and half in the wild, as a cage-like structure partly encloses the baboon (Museum of Modern Art 2005: 213). My film draws on this iconography — the 'beast' BJ Vorster mutates into in *The Dream of the Tree* is likewise a South African Chacma baboon. I chose to use the iconography of a South African Chacma baboon for various reasons. Firstly, I needed to visually portray, in the second prophetic dream, the prediction that if the Vorster/Nebuchadnezzar character did not heed the warnings implicit in the dream he would become like an animal and his "dwelling would be with the beasts of the field" (Daniel 4:25). I needed to imply this transition from man to beast without giving away the final emanation of this form (after Blake's *Nebuchadnezzar* prints of 1795, which I discuss later in this section) as it would have reduced the climactic impact of the story. Secondly, the South African Chacma baboon (also known as the Cape baboon) inhabits

the southern region of Devil's Peak, which is portrayed in the film as the wilderness to which the Vorster/Nebuchadnezzar character is banished. Thus it seemed to be the most appropriate wild animal to use as the beast in the dream. Thirdly, the baboon screams at the end of this scene, predicting the anguished and abject state in which Vorster/Nebuchadnezzar finds himself when he is banished into the wilderness. Baboons usually scream when threatened, scared or confronted by predators. At the same time the image of a screaming baboon is quite terrifying due to the way it bares its teeth. So, for me, the screaming baboon was a potent image to use in the film in that it is visually fear-inducing, is indicative of the behavior of a wild animal, and is simultaneously an emanation of fear. The screaming baboon in the film was also inspired by Bacon's image of the baboon (see Fig. 3.40). The baboon in Bacon's image, as with the baboon in the film, implies a human presence. The baboon in the film has just mutated from Vorster into a baboon (see Fig. 3.41 and Fig. 3.42). Similarly, in Bacon's image, "Bacon pens the viewer into the enclosure with the ferocious creature, suggesting a close correlation between the two beings" (Museum of Modern Art 2005: 213). Thus the baboon in the film predicts Vorster's beastly state, which is finally revealed in its totality toward the end of the film where he crawls, naked on all fours (see Fig. 3.43).



Figure 3.39Bacon, F. 1949. **Head II** [oil on canvas] [Online] Available: <http://ts1.mm.bing.net/th?&id=HN.607985967192343906&w=300&h=300&c=0&pid=1.9&rs=0&p=0> (Accessed 4.05.2013)

This portrayal of the naked, half-beast, screaming Nebuchadnezzar/Vorster character can be interpreted in various ways. On one level it simply illustrates the biblical narrative; the biblical king cast out into the wilderness and made to live like a beast. On another level, it alludes to (albeit obliquely) Vorster's political disgrace and his final years, which he appeared to live out embittered and isolated (Giliomee 1983). Finally, this portrayal of Vorster symbolises the wish fulfillment of the narrative, in which the 'Big Man' faces his crimes against humanity and atones for them. The scream in the context of the film is a scream of horror at his own soul, echoing the biblical narrative of Nebuchadnezzar's plight in the wilderness, where he has to remain until he

acknowledges his sins (Daniel 4:34).



Figure 3.40Bacon, F. 1944. Study of a Baboon [oil on canvas] [Online] Available: <http://ts4.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608041466758892373&w=133&h=147&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7> (Accessed 4.05.2013)



Figure 3.41 Stewart, M. 2012. Still from *Big Man* [digital image]



Figure 3.42 Stewart, M. 2012. Still from *Big Man* [digital image]

The visual presentation of Vorster in the wilderness as Nebuchadnezzar (see Fig. 3.43) — beast-like, terror-stricken, naked and debased on all fours — has strong reference to the English Romantic painter and poet William Blake’s engravings of Nebuchadnezzar (engraved 1795, printed 1805) (see Fig. 3.45, Fig. 3.46 and Fig. 3.47). While the influence of Blake’s engravings can be seen only in the final stages of the film (see Fig. 3.43) (with early echoes in the depiction of the dog and the baboon), it was these images of Nebuchadnezzar that provided the initial visual spur for the film when I first came up with the idea of re-imagining this particular story from *The Book of Daniel*. This initial visualization of the Vorster/Nebuchadnezzar character in the wilderness influenced the tenor of the film and the fact that everything that came beforehand in the narrative was building up to this final dramatic metamorphosis. Fig. 3.44 is the first image I made for the film, a small pen-and-ink drawing of BJ Vorster naked and on all fours. (I would have liked to reproduce the pen-and-ink finish of this drawing in the animated version, but this proved impossible. The closest I could come to emulating the feel of this drawing was through the paint-on-glass method.) It was thus this small drawing, with its influence of Blake’s *Nebuchadnezzar* that began the narrative process. Beginning in 1795, Blake made four impressions of this image; I have drawn on three of them because the fourth went missing in 1887. While there are slight variations in detail, and different tonal and colour details between the impressions, the composition remains the same for all. It was these

engravings that provided the initial visual spur for how to show the 'fallen' Big Man'/Nebuchadnezzar/Vorster character when he is at his most abject.



Figure 3.43 Stewart, M. 2013. Still from Big Man [digital image]



Figure 3.44 Stewart, M. 2010. Untitled.

Blake's prints are illustrations of the biblical description of Nebuchadnezzar in *The Book of Daniel* at that part of the narrative where he is clearly beast-like and in the wilderness: "and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws" (Daniel: 5:33). Blake portrays Nebuchadnezzar as a naked, vulnerable half-beast whose fearful facial expression and wide staring eyes powerfully reveal his terror. Alexander Gilchrist, in his biography *The Life of William Blake* (first published in 1863), describes Blake's Nebuchadnezzar as a

[m]ad king crawling like a hunted beast into a den among the rocks; his tangled golden beard sweeping the ground, his nails like vultures' talons, and his wild eyes full of sullen terror. The powerful frame is losing all semblance of humanity, and is bestial in its rough growth of hair, reptile in the toad-like markings and spottings of the skin, which takes on unnatural hues of green, blue, and russet. (Gilchrist 1863: 408–409)



Figure 3.45 Blake, W. 1795. Nebuchadnezzar [engraving] [Online] Available: <http://ts1.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608027615496769345&w=215&h=152&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7> (Accessed 7.05.2013)

In the Tate Art Gallery commentary on this image it is suggested that Blake's image equates Nebuchadnezzar's beast-like appearance with 'moral corruption'. Blake's version

of Nebuchadnezzar has been likened to Blake's character Urizen, from his *First Book of Urizen*, a creation myth from Blake's visionary ideology, told as an illustrated poem. The poem is both a satire and criticism of the dominance of rational thought and materiality over "spiritual insight and self-expression". In Blake's mythology, Urizen personifies reason, which Blake portrays as a source of evil or oppression. Blake's belief in the power of imaginative insight was contrary to the dominant cultural, moral, social and religious tenets. It also underlay his personal mythology, which he adopted as a means for understanding the nature of the universe and which underpins his poems and artwork (Butlin1990).

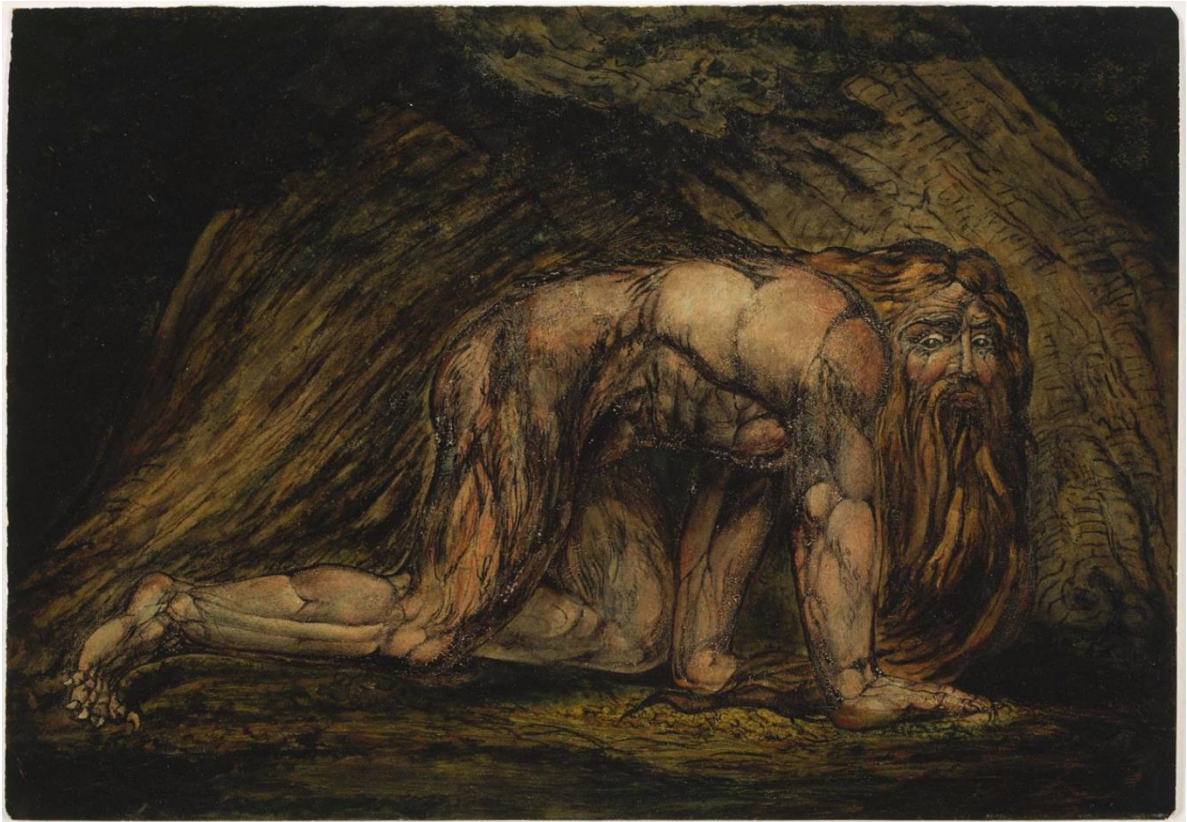


Figure 3.46Blake, W. 1795. Nebuchadnezzar [engraving] [Online] Available: <http://ts1.mm.bing.net/th?&id=HN.608042136776150109&w=300&h=300&c=0&pid=1.9&rs=0&p=0> (Accessed 7.05.2013)



Figure 3.47Blake, W. 1795. *Nebuchadnezzar* [engraving] [Online] Available: <http://ts4.explicit.bing.net/th?id=HN.607994269371728105&w=213&h=145&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7> (Accessed 7.05.2013)

The catalogue entry, by Martin Butlin, for this image on the Tate Art Gallery website suggests that Blake's character of Urizen relates to the prints of *Nebuchadnezzar* which represent 'Reason losing his reason'. In Blake's mythology, as with the biblical narrative, *Nebuchadnezzar* is shown as a noxious presence reduced to a state of madness. Butlin also posits that the twisted roots behind the figure of *Nebuchadnezzar* may represent the tree or even the stumps of the tree from *Nebuchadnezzar's* dream (Butlin 1990). This sentiment regarding Blake's image of *Nebuchadnezzar* is echoed in a passage of a poem from the 1870s, *City of Dreadful Night* by James Thomson that was inspired by Blake's image

After a hundred steps I grew aware
Of something crawling in the lane below;
It seemed a wounded creature prostrate there
That sobbed with pangs in making progress slow,
The hind limbs stretched to push, the fore limbs then
To drag; for it would die in its own den.

But coming level with it I discerned
That it had been a man; for at my tread
It stopped in its sore travail and half-turned,
Leaning upon its right, and raised its head,
And with the left hand twitched back as in ire
Long grey unreverend locks befouled with mire.
A haggard filthy face with bloodshot eyes,
An infamy for manhood to behold. (Harper 1953: 71)

George M. Harper comments on the visual accuracy of this poem and how it evokes so clearly the ‘beast-man’ of Blake’s image (Harper 1953: 71). It has also been suggested that Blake’s portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar alludes to King George III (King of Great Britain and Ireland from 1760–1801 and then King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland from 1801 until his death in 1838 after the union of the two countries). King George III was contemporary to Blake and was regarded by some during the first two decades of his reign as a tyrannical leader, although this view was in opposition to attitudes that dominated later on during his rule in the early 1800s when he became “a revered symbol of national resistance to French ideas and French power” (Reitan 1964: viii). John Mee (1998: 108) in his essay “‘The doom of tyrants’: William Blake, Richard ‘Citizen’ Lee and the millenarian public sphere” suggests that the idea of Blake’s Nebuchadnezzar being an evocation of King George III is pertinent, particularly since the King had suffered a bout of madness between 1788 and 1789, and Blake’s engravings were created in 1795 (Mee 1998). Mee further posits: “Nebuchadnezzar was a traditional image of the regal oppressor, but after King George III’s attack of madness in 1788–89 recourse to biblical archetype became a particularly appropriate motif for radicals seeking to attack the king” (Mee 1998: 108).

The power of this image as an expression of moral corruption, its obvious reference to Nebuchadnezzar and the way it so aptly describes a physical and spiritual fallen state made it an ideal image on which to base the character of Vorster/Nebuchadnezzar. In the film, the penultimate shot of Vorster shows him as is described in *The Book of Daniel* (Daniel: 5:33) — naked in the wilderness, on all fours, and beast-like. In this shot (see Fig. 3.43), I deliberately tried to refer to the *Nebuchadnezzar* of Blake’s engravings as faithfully as possible, while adapting Blake’s more idealised rendition of the human

figure to Vorster's likeness and corpulent form. Each impression of the engraving that Blake made is coloured differently. The print seen in Fig. 3.45 is carefully detailed and luminously coloured, with meticulous attention to the texture and colour of the flesh, which as Gilchrist points out, has a reptilian appearance (Gilchrist 1863: 408–409). The grotto (or perhaps the roots of a tree) behind Nebuchadnezzar is also luminous, with a metallic-like surface. Fig. 3.47 is, like Fig. 3.45, delicately detailed, but less highly coloured with softer, more monochromatic tones. Fig. 3.46 on the other hand has a tonal richness but is more somber in mood than the other two. Coloured mostly in blacks and browns, this image is shadowy and dense. It is Blake's impression seen in Fig. 3.46 that partly inspired the sepia and black tones of the wilderness scene in the film. In the film this coloration came from using a 'Lamp' black gauche on glass that is placed on a light box. On paper this shows up black, but on glass with underneath lighting, the browns and sepias are brought out. BJ Vorster's body and facial expression were made with close scrutiny of these prints. Vorster's pose also deliberately mimics Blake's image, as does the depiction of the "nails like birds claws" the hair and beard "grown like eagles feathers". At the point where Vorster screams, I attempted to emulate the terrified, staring eyes in Blake's impression (see Fig. 3.48).



Figure 3.48 Stewart, M. 2014/ Blake, W. 1795. Cropped images from Epilogue scene (Big Man) and Blake's Nebuchadnezzar [engraving] [Online] Available: <http://ts1.mm.bing.net/th?&id=HN.608042136776150109&w=300&h=300&c=0&pid=1.9&rs=0&p=0> (Accessed 7.05.2013)

In closing, my research prior to and during the creation of my film accessed textual, literary and visual accounts of the 'Big Man' theme which impacted on my exploration of the dual notions of the specific and the archetypal (or the general). In particular, this investigation influenced my portrayal and conception of the archetypal 'Big Man' figure

(as Nebuchadnezzar) and the portrayal of the specific 'Big Man' figure (of BJ Vorster). The dual nature of my exploration extends to the portrayal of Vorster as an incoming leader on the one hand, proclaiming his aim to "walk in the footsteps of Dr Verwoerd" (in the *Prologue* scene), and on the other hand a troubled individual suffering from bad dreams (in *The Dream of the Tree* and *The Dream of the Statue* scenes). This research further elucidated the various textual and visual emanations of fictitious and actual 'Big Man'-type characters, all of which helped me to determine the particular nature of my own exploration.

CHAPTER 4

TRADITIONAL ANIMATION PROCESSES AND THE DIGITAL PLATFORM IN ‘BIG MAN’

4.1 A brief overview

Big Man drew on three traditional¹³ animation processes. These were paper cut-out animation, frame-by-frame (cel and paper-based) animation, and paint-on-glass animation. Each approach was used strategically in particular scenes of *Big Man* and in each case was chosen for the manner in which it informed the subject and visual aesthetic of *Big Man*. While each process followed traditional methods of animation, they all accessed the digital platform in various ways. This was either through the integration of digital imagery, digital live footage and/or the use of digital technology and digital applications to facilitate the production and post-production phases. This section thus explores the traditional processes used in *Big Man* and explains the various ways in which each of these traditional processes accessed the digital platform.

This section also contextualises the traditional animation processes used in *Big Man* within the historical traditions of animation. In particular it will focus on the various ways in which the works, processes and ideas of specific animators influenced the visual, conceptual and/or technical aspects of my film. I have focused only on those that relate to the approaches I used in *Big Man*. The paper cut-out approaches used in the film mostly drew on the innovations of the German film maker Lotte Reiniger (1899–1981), the Japanese film director and animator Noburo Ofuji (1900–1961), the Russian filmmaker Yuri Norstein (1941–) and the Czech-born, Berlin animator Berthold Bartosch (1893–1968). For the paint-on-glass process I looked at the work and processes of Canadian animator Caroline Leaf (1946–) and German painter and experimental film maker Walter Ruttmann (1887–1941).

¹³While I am aware that ‘traditional’ animation can refer to the Disney tradition of animating (Wells 1998: 37), in this case it refers to pre-digital animation processes.

4.2 The exploration of paper cut-out animation: ‘Prologue’ scene (Dr HF Verwoerd’s funeral)

Stop-motion, paper cut-out animation is a frame-by-frame animating process in which movement is created with cut-out forms or jointed puppets constructed from paper. These are usually laid on an animating table beneath a camera, moved by hand, and shot incrementally to create movement when the frames are viewed at speed. The cut-outs can be placed directly onto the background or onto transparent (glass or Perspex) planes that are raised from the background layer. The number of transparent planes fluctuates depending on the depth of field and animated detail the animator may want to evoke. There are two dominant approaches that define paper cut-out animation. Each of these is characterised by the effects caused by differences in lighting. The first is silhouette animation, a process by which cut-outs are backlit, which causes them to appear as solid, silhouetted shapes. The second approach uses top lighting. This picks up surface detail such as colour, tone, texture, gesture and line (Furniss 1999: 45).

Cut-out animation was used as early as 1926 by the Japanese film director and animator Noburo Ofuji in his cut-out silhouette short films. Ofuji was an innovator of the cut-out approach as well as of silhouette animation. The particular technique he developed was derived from *chiyogami*, a decorative rice paper (with patterns printed by wood block) traditionally used in Japanese shadow pictures. This paper formed his puppet segments and became a distinguishing feature of his early paper cut-out films (Sharp 2011: 185), such as *The Black Cat* (1926) and *The Thief of Baghdad* (1926). Ofuji’s innovations within the tradition of paper cut-out animation have impacted significantly on the subsequent development of this genre (McDonald 2006: 176). *The Whale*, which was first made in 1927 as a silent black and white film, is seen as an “example of innovative animation” (Bendazzi 2015: 181) in that Ofuji set up his *chiyogami* cut-outs on overlapping glass planes. The effect was an enigmatic world of depth, layers and shadow. Inspired by the visual possibilities of colour film and a fascination with stained-glass windows, he remade *The Whale* 25 years later with coloured transparent cellophane sheets which he combined with paper cut-outs, a multi-plane animation table and backlighting (see Fig. 4.1). These combined processes added a complexity of layers and an immense subtlety and depth to the film. The second remake caught the attention of artists such as Picasso, who early on recognised the potential of this medium (MOMA 1976). *The Whale* significantly impacted

on my decision to experiment with transparent layering and backlighting to achieve a subtlety of depth and light, as well as my experimentation with combining transparent layers and paper cut-outs. The visual aesthetic of Ofuji's use of silhouette animation set against tonally subtle backgrounds, as seen in *The Whale*, also influenced my approach in the paper cut-out scenes and in the subsequent digitally animated scenes, which emulate the look of silhouette animation (an aspect of *Big Man* which will be discussed in Chapter Five).

The use of transparent layering has since become a significant trait of cut-out animation and is exemplified by the films of Reiniger and Norstein, for example. Lotte Reiniger used a similar approach to backlighting and layering to that of Ofuji in her early silhouette animations. This can be seen in her ambitious animated feature film, *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926), which she took a step further than Ofuji's 1926 version of *The Whale* by colour tinting the film by hand (see Fig. 4.2).



Figure 4.1Ofuji, N. 1952. *The Whale* [Online] Available: <http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-LB043YcQjB4/TtlexFfWriI/AAAAAAAAAIR0/ZSkqaRTZOIQ/s1600/kujira5.jpg> (Accessed 2.07.2016)



Figure 4.2 Reiniger, L. 1926. Colour tinted background in *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* [Online] Available: http://i1249.photobucket.com/albums/hh514/djevojka1/LotteReiniger/5408461542_c4fc93f472_b.jpg (Accessed 2.07.2016)

Reiniger was interested in exploring contemporary technology to produce effects and to facilitate her stop-motion process. In the early 1920s she developed a ‘trick table’— a development of her earlier simple under-lit, animation table with a camera above, as seen in Fig. 4.3. Her later ‘trick table’ included raised layers of glass, lit from below with an adjustable camera above (see Fig. 4.4) (Leslie 2002: 49). This allowed for a great deal of flexibility and enabled her to animate on layers, at different speeds and to create an “unprecedented three-dimensionality in animation” (Schönfeld 2006: 181). While Disney later further developed and patented the multi-plane camera and used it to great effect in his films, it was Reiniger who pioneered the process in *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*. It was from this setup that her animation took place and where she was able to experiment with new effects. I was influenced by the animation setup of both her early animation table and her later multi-plane ‘trick table’ for the creation of the traditionally animated scenes in my film. I found her directions for setting up an animation environment around a ‘trick table’ extremely useful, and was influenced by these when getting my own animation table custom made (Isaacs 1971).



Figure 4.3 Reiniger, L. 1920. Reiniger's first 'trick table', Berlin 1920 [Online] Available: <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue1.3/images/Reiniger8a.gif> (Accessed 2.07.2016)

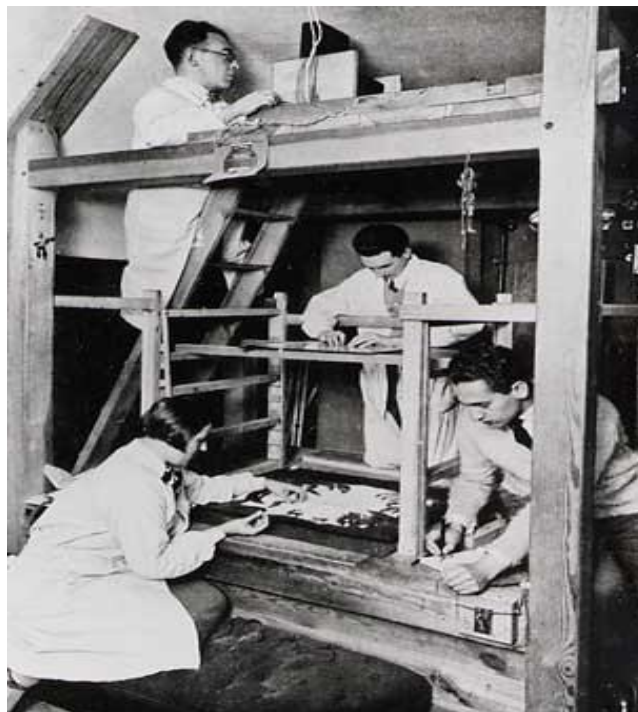


Figure 4.4 Reiniger, L. 1923. Reiniger's multi-plane 'trick table' [Online] Available: http://img.over-blog-kiwi.com/1/85/08/28/20151108/ob_07693d_lotte-reiniger-et-son-equipe.jpg (Accessed 2.07.2016)

Reiniger employed the skills of the German painter and experimental film maker, Walter Ruttmann, to create trick effects. In particular, he used an innovative stop-motion process which involved coloured wax and a wax slicing machine. The stop-motion wax-cutting process was introduced to Ruttmann by the German abstract animator and painter, Oskar Fischinger (1900–1967). Various shapes and colours of wax were built up and embedded into what ended up as a wax block. The wax-cutting machine then sliced off wax very thinly, layer by layer, each layer being photographed frame-by-frame. When played as film, the effect was a flowing, swirling, plastic movement, which Reiniger used for expressive transitions and backgrounds in *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*. Reiniger employed Ruttmann to create painterly effects for certain scenes in the film, such as “soft sensuous paintings on glass”, “jagged expressionistic lightening” and “exciting pulsating effects” (Furniss 2009: 17). These effects were very similar to those of his innovative painterly abstract animated films, which he created by painting directly onto celluloid. Ruttmann believed the relatively new technology of film, with its characteristic dimensions of movement, light and projection, paved the way for a new painterly art (experimental abstract film) that had the potential to “represent the artist’s core experience of modernity”. To Ruttmann, time, speed and tempo symbolised the “essence of modernity” and were also central characteristics of his painterly animated experiments which he described in his 1919 manifesto on art as “*Malerei mit Zeit*” (Painting with Time) (Schönfeld 2006: 172). Ruttmann’s first film, *Lichtspiel Opus 1*, opened in Berlin in 1921 (see Fig. 4.5), and featured the abstract movement and rhythm of colour and soft, sensuous marks, synchronised to an original soundtrack.



Figure 4.5Ruttmann, W. 1921. Still from *Lichtspiel Opus 1* [Online] Available: <http://www.see-this-sound.at/files/60/large/large.jpg?1273514587> (Accessed 3.07.2016)

Ruttmann is famously cited as having criticised Reiniger's fairy-tale subject matter, seeing it as having no relevance to modern day Berlin in the 1920s. This has caused various commentators over the years to claim she had no political or social morality, and to relegate Reiniger's subject matter to the status of children's entertainment (Furniss 2009: 17). This can hardly be an accurate assessment of Reiniger and her work, particularly in light of her contribution to the genre and her subsequent influence on animators and artists. Also, in terms of her subject matter, while within the fairy-tale tradition, it sometimes contained underlying anti-Nazi sentiment (she left Berlin for France and then Britain in the 1930s to escape Nazi Germany). Furthermore, before she left Germany, Reiniger was part of a group of artists, musicians, playwrights and filmmakers who all shared modernist ideals. Between 1920 and 1929 she collaborated with serious film makers such as Fritz Lang, Rochus Gliese, Friedrich Zelnich and Jean Renoir, and the playwright Berthold Brecht (Schönfeld 2006: 174). It was also due to her interest and participation in modernist art that she became aware of Walter Ruttmann and employed him to work on backgrounds and effects for *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*. While my film does use paint-on-glass animation, and while subsequent scenes were certainly influenced by Ruttmann's abstract, painterly films, in the paper cut-out scenes of *Big Man* I restricted my process to layered transparencies and paper cut-outs.

Before embarking on the paper cut-out scene, I researched predominantly Reiniger's (and

to a lesser extent others such as Yuri Norstein's and Norman McLaren's) techniques of creating and moving puppets. To move paper cut-out puppets for animation, one generally uses an implement that allows for enough control to move small sections at a time. For example, Reiniger used a toothpick (see Fig. 4.6) and Norstein uses tweezers (see Fig. 4.7) (Purves 2010: 13).



Figure 4.6 Reiniger, L. 1926. Lotte Reiniger at work on Prince Achmed [Online] Available: http://uschefnerarchive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/lotte_featured.jpg (Accessed 3.07.2016)



Figure 4.7 Norstein, Y. 1985. Norstein at work on The Overcoat [Online] Available: http://proyectoidis.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/I-38-ISKUS-norsh-f27_640.jpg (Accessed 3.07.2016)

There are two dominant methods of making paper cut-outs. The first is with moveable parts that are fixed at the joints. This method is exemplified by Reiniger's process. She fixed the joints of her articulated puppets with lead pins, allowing for controlled, refined movement. The second method is a more open form of creating movement, where joints or parts are not fixed (Isaacs 1971). This method was used in some of the very early experiments with animation by early modernist artists, such as Hans Richter in his abstract experimental film *Rhythmus 21* (1921) (Umland 2008). This process has been developed by subsequent experimental film makers such as Norman McLaren, exemplified in his stop-motion paper cut-out animation *Le Merle (The Blackbird)* (1958) (see Fig. 4.8). The film is based on and animated to a traditional French-Canadian folk song, "Môn Merle", which is sung in the film by the *Trio Lyrique of Montreal* (Williams 1990). For my film I adopted both approaches. Some scenes involved puppets that were fixed at the joints, while others involved a more open-form approach, depending on the nature of the animated movement.



Figure 4.8 McLaren, N. 1958. McLaren working on *Le Merle* with Evelyn Lambert (who collaborated with McLaren in this film) [Online] Available: <http://animationresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/image179.jpg> (Accessed 4.07.2016)

While animators like Yuri Norstein are opposed to using the digital animation platform to create animation and are strong advocates of the traditional pre-digital animation processes, the cut-out animation technique has largely been replaced by the digital platform

and digital animation processes (Norstein 1997), the main reason being that the digital platform greatly facilitates the animating process. The pilot of the popular animated series *South Park*, titled *The Spirit of Christmas: Jesus VS Santa* (1997), for example, was a traditional paper cut-out animation and took three months to complete (see Fig. 4.9). In order to keep up with production demands, each series is now created within three weeks using the digital platform and uses digital puppets, although the production team make an effort to evoke the same “homemade look as the crude cartoons Parker and Stone made in college with construction papers and scissors” for the pilot (Leonard 2006). Another example is the popular BBC children’s television series *Charlie and Lola*, adapted from Laura Child’s award-winning first book of the series, *I Will Not Ever Never Eat A Tomato* (2000) (BBC Press Office 2005). Although digitally created, the animated series self-consciously evokes traditional stop-motion, paper cut-out process (see Fig. 4.10). Similarly (although referring to the very different style of silhouette animation), a three-minute digitally animated sequence directed by Ben Hibon for the Harry Potter film, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, emulates the silhouette animation tradition as well as Indonesian shadow puppet theatre, wherein the shadow silhouettes of the puppets were projected onto fabric. This animation faithfully imitates the paper cut-out animation genre, from the movement, visual appearance and articulation of the silhouette paper cut-outs to the enigmatic soft tones and layers of the background elements (see Fig. 4.11). The animators also wanted to refer to the effects of projected shadows onto fabric — a distinguishing characteristic of Indonesian shadow puppet theatre — and were able to successfully evoke this effect using 3D applications (Maya and Z-Brush). They also digitally recreated the effect of backlighting used in traditional paper cut-out, silhouette animation and Indonesian shadow theatre (Failes 2010).



Figure 4.9South Park: The Spirit of Christmas – Jesus VS Santa. 1997 [Online] Available: https://cdn1.lockerdome.com/uploads/cfb9ad72dda2a58140c7167f8dd768753ec4ce1d4909f4656c3e1189bcd3114f_large (Accessed 6.07.2016)



Figure 4.10Charlie and Lola: I will not Ever Never Eat a Tomato. 2005. [Online] Available: http://cdn.iview.abc.net.au/thumbs/460/ZY7657A001S00557fb128875f43.68441362_1280.jpg (Accessed 6.07.2016)



Figure 4.11 Three-minute animated sequence from *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. 2010 [Online] Available: https://www.fxguide.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/10Nov/hp7/hp7_anim.jpg (Accessed 4.07.2016)

Paper cut-out animation was used in the *Prologue* scenes of *Big Man*— in the scene of Dr HF Verwoerd’s state funeral and in the scene showing a portion of BJ Vorster’s acceptance speech soon after he was nominated as Verwoerd’s successor. The process combined silhouette cut-out animation and top-lit cut-out animation where surface details were picked out. A motivation for using the traditional, stop-motion paper cut-out technique in *Prologue* was to visually and narratively distinguish this section from the subsequent narrative. In contrast to the relative historical accuracy of *Prologue*, the following biblical narrative is entirely fictional. The use of the ‘outmoded’ approach of paper cut-out animation and the characteristic visual aesthetics (of recognisably ‘handmade’ imagery and ‘shaky’ movement) was a deliberate attempt to allude to the similarly ‘shaky’ movement of old newsreels from the 1960s that were shot with analogue, handheld cameras. While the cut-outs were hand-crafted and moved by hand, the process integrated digital imagery, either as background imagery over which the puppets were animated or composited as overlays in the post-animation process. Animating these scenes was by far the most ambitious and labour-intensive process of animation used to create the film. However, the cut-out animation process was facilitated by digital stop-motion and digital camera technology, which did reduce the labour.

The first scene of *Big Man* portrays the historical event of the funeral of the former South African president Dr HF Verwoerd after his assassination by Dimitri Tsafendas on 6 September 1966. The subject matter draws directly from archival footage and historical events, whereas the subsequent narrative is fictional and follows biblical episodes from chapters two and four *The Book of Daniel*. The scene reveals the historical context of the narrative and outlines the events preceding BJ Vorster's becoming the Prime Minister of South Africa in 1966. This scene does not document the entire funeral, but rather shows some of the key scenes detailing the event, such as the Union Buildings in Pretoria where the state ceremony took place, the funeral procession showing the Verwoerd family members, the pallbearers, the military guard, the general public and finally Heroes' Acre, the cemetery where Verwoerd was buried. The main source material for the creation of this scene was BBC archival footage of Verwoerd's state funeral (BBC Archive 1966). This footage was instrumental in forming the visual aesthetic of both the paper cut-out puppets and the digitally created backgrounds within this scene.

The paper cut-out approach to the puppets followed the silhouette paper cut-out animation tradition in that in each case most of the puppet (the torso and limbs) was constructed with black card and functioned on the animating table as silhouetted shapes. The heads, hands, clothing and other accessories were detailed in sepia and black ink on watercolour paper. The backgrounds on which the puppets were placed were prints of digital drawings. To pick up the surface details on the paper cut-out puppets and the backgrounds, I used soft top-directional lights. To heighten the silhouette effect and also to illuminate the backgrounds, which were visually richer when lit from below, I used bottom lighting (this is the light box of the animating table). While this was not a flawless method, it created the overall visual effect I wanted. As seen in Fig. 4.12, the facial features, hands, and details such as hats, the bouquet held by Betsie Verwoerd, and shirt collars, are picked up by the top lighting. The bottom lighting helps the silhouette effect of the black shapes of the torsos and limbs, and hides most joints and pins. The backlighting also gives the background drawings luminosity. The dark torsos and limbs were made from black card, while the surface details were created in ink and brush on white paper. This approach allowed me to create expressive detail and to characterise the puppets. At the same time the mostly silhouetted bodies and limbs were made up of simple shapes which are easier to animate than detailed form. Animating a solid shape is very forgiving, as one only needs to focus on the outer edges of the forms in motion. While the puppets were hand-crafted and

the movement all done by hand, as in the traditional approach, the animating procedure was facilitated by the digital stop-motion animation application Dragon StopMotion Pro. Like most stop-motion animation software, Dragon StopMotion Pro links directly to a digital camera and takes over the camera functions and settings. These functions can then be adjusted within the program. The program captures each shot as a high-resolution still, which can be directly viewed on the computer screen, within the application's animation timeline. Each high-resolution still is also downloaded to disc and stored as a numbered file. A particular advantage of this software is that one can review the movement as one is busy animating. This greatly assists with the analysis and correction of movement during the process of animation.



Figure 4.12 Stewart, M. 2013. Still from *Big Man* showing funeral procession with paper cut-outs [pen and ink on paper and digital drawing]

The visual aesthetic (of combining dark form with detailed form) was inspired by Bartosch's *Le Idée* (*The Idea*) (1932) (see Fig. 4.13)¹⁴. *Le Idée* is an adaption of a woodcut or wordless novel of the same name created by the German artist Frans Masereel and published in 1920. (The story personifies an 'idea' as a naked woman. This visualisation incenses the bourgeoisie and inspires the masses to revolt.) I was drawn to the way that

¹⁴ The quality of this image is very poor due to the age of the film.

many of Bartosch's paper cut-out puppets were shown with detailed faces, hands and objects against the dark silhouetted bodies, as well as his enigmatic luminous lighting effects and layered subtle backgrounds. Interestingly, Lotte Reiniger also employed Bartosch (along with Ruttmann) to produce effects for *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*, where his contribution included creating water and wave scenes with undulating, overlapping layers and star-filled skies of varying tonal gradations and transparencies (Furniss 2009: 17). According to Furniss it was this experience of working with Reiniger on at least two of her films that "made possible the refined layering and luminous effects in his own subsequent masterpiece *The Idea*" (2009: 17).



Figure 4.13 Bartosch, B. 1932. Still from *Le Idée* [Online] Available: <http://cinecorner.fr/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/l-idee.jpg> (Accessed 4.07.2016)



Figure 4.14 Bartosch, B. 1932. Still from *Le Idée* [Online] Available: https://i.ytimg.com/vi/zT_PCFqd2M/hqdefault.jpg (Accessed 4.07.2016)

Also of interest to me was the subject matter of this film and the way in which it was stylistically conceived in terms of crowd scenes, military parades and funeral processions (see Fig. 4.14). These scenes were an inspiration for the stylistic conception of the scene of Verwoerd's funeral. While I believe Reiniger was a highly innovative animator both technically and conceptually, and while I concur with the commentators who defend Reiniger's political conscience and fairy-tale subject matter, I found Bartosch's subject matter and setting more sympathetic to my own visual approach and subject matter.

Figures 4.15 and 4.16 show all the human puppets created for the funeral scene: the Verwoerd family entourage, BJ Vorster, and the pallbearers. As with the approach used by Bartosch, the bulk of the bodies are dark and made from black card. Details such as faces, hands, collars, necks, the bouquet, hats and the funeral programmes are rendered in detail, with ink and watercolour on paper. The puppets are articulated at the limbs and joined with small, black commercial split-pins. While I noted Reiniger's method of using soft lead pins at the joints in *The Art of Lotte Reiniger* (Isaacs 1971), I eventually opted for split pins as I

found these easier to animate with. As is evident in Fig. 4.15, I had to make more than one version of most of the puppets. This was due to the fact that the nature and direction of the movement changed from one scene to another. The first time the family entourage appears, they walk at a semi-frontal angle across the scene. The second time they appear, they are following the coffin procession and are shown in profile. For the pallbearers (see Fig. 4.17), I only included details that would be revealed in the shot. I thus did not include feet on any of these puppets and did not need to include the hands of the pallbearers, whose torsos were concealed by Verwoerd's coffin. Even though the paper cut-out process is economical, as it does not involve redrawing the forms frame by frame to indicate movement, it is still time consuming as each articulated joint is moved by hand one frame at a time. In the pallbearer section of this scene, for example, eight articulated puppets carry Verwoerd's coffin, thus when all the figures are in the shot, each animation frame requires thirty-three segments (heads, hands and limbs) to be minutely moved by hand (see Fig. 4.15).



Figure 4.15 Stewart, M. 2013. Paper puppets from Prologue scene (Big Man): (entourage)
[card, paper, split-pins, pen and ink]



Figure 4.16 Stewart, M. 2013. Paper puppets from Prologue scene (Big Man): (pallbearers)
[card, paper, split-pins, pen and ink]



Figure 4.17 Stewart, M. 2013. Paper puppets from Prologue scene (Big Man): (pallbearers with coffin) [card, paper, split-pins, pen and ink]

All the motion in the funeral procession is walking. Accomplishing a realistic walk is, according to the animator Ken Harris, one of the most difficult cycles of motion to master (Williams 2001: 102). Richard Williams demonstrates the principles of creating walk cycles in his book *The animator's survival kit* (2001), which proved an invaluable source for creating the walk cycles of all the puppets in this scene. One difficulty was mapping out and maintaining the nature and character of each walk. Another was keeping track of the motion, which is usually made easy in animating programs such as Macromedia Flash, as one is animating within a timeline where each frame is numerically recorded and visible. However, the only way I could monitor where I was in the walk cycles of each figure, was to keep a detailed frame-by-frame log of the walk cycles for each puppet (see Fig. 4.18). The log helped to keep track of each particular walk cycle for each puppet. This was necessary, with the entourage in particular, because people do not generally walk in unison or at the same pace or with the same posture. The animating process was a little easier with the pallbearers, as they were walking in unison due the shared load of the coffin, and thus were each at the same point of the walk cycle for each frame. In this case, I only needed one cycle of motion to present the group of pallbearers (indicated by the letters 'PB' in Fig. 4.18). I did add differences in posture and head movement with each pallbearer, to avoid

the motion of each figure appearing too monotonous. Fig. 4.18 shows the plotting of the walk cycles for three figures (Betsie Verwoerd and family members) and the pallbearers. The actual frames of the animation are highlighted in yellow. The walk cycle for each puppet is shown in sequences of thirteen frames. So the number numbering associated with each puppet refers to the particular stage of the walk cycle the puppet is at, at a particular frame.

	1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	27	29	31	33	35	37
PB	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7
BETSY	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
DAUGHTER	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
WOMAN	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7
DF	39	41	43	45	47	49	51	53	55	57	59	61	63	65	67	69	71	73	75
PB	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2
BETSY	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5
DAUGHTER	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
WOMAN	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2
DF	77	79	81	83	85	87	89	91	93	95	97	99	101	103	105	107	109	111	113
PB	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
BETSY	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
DAUGHTER	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3
WOMAN	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Figure 4.18 Stewart, M. 2013. Page from walk cycle log [pencil and paper]

A difficulty in pure silhouette animation is that emotion can only be shown through action or if the face is shown in profile. It is possible to show facial expression and emotion in silhouette animation, as can be seen in Fig. 4.6, showing Reiniger at work on *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*. Once the head faces frontally, all features disappear. I chose to use a combination of silhouetted forms with elements of detail so that I was not limited to animating in profile and could show detailed facial features and expressions. The benefit of having the limbs and torsos mostly in silhouette is that dark forms are easier to animate (Isaacs 1971). In this scene, I did use one instance of pure silhouette, paper cut-out animation in the creation and animation of a police dog. There was evidence of the

presence of police dogs at the funeral in the archival footage, but the placement, movement and creation of this particular puppet was not sourced from the archival footage. I created the puppet from photographic references of police dogs sourced from the web. The dog was introduced in the funeral parade, straining at a lead, to add a sense of tension. It also subtly predicts the beast-like form that Vorster/Nebuchadnezzar takes on in the final scene of the film. As I wanted realistic animal movement, this puppet had many moveable parts, as can be seen in Fig. 4.19, the initial template for the puppet. Fig 4.20 shows the completed fully articulated puppet. The many articulated joints allowed me to manipulate the body more diversely and expressively.

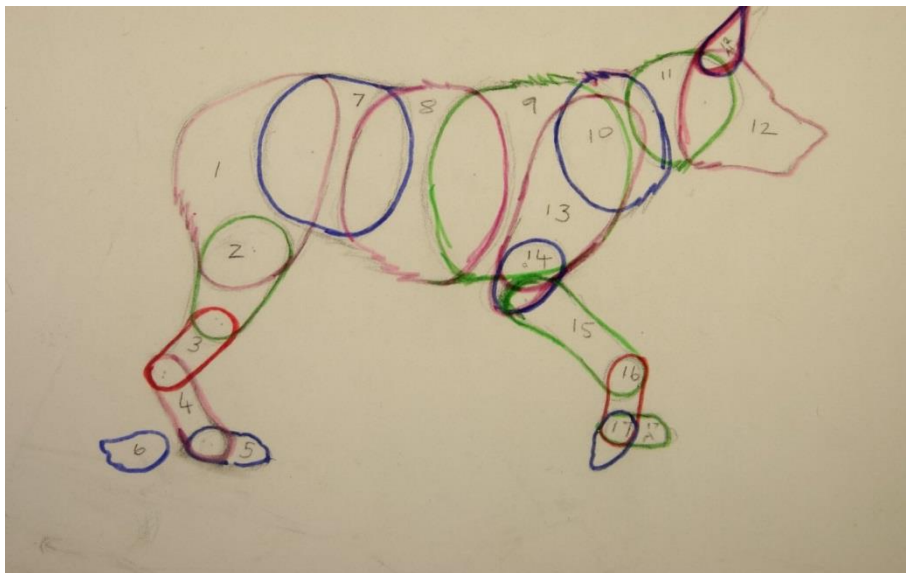


Figure 4.19 Stewart, M. 2013. Template for police dog, puppet [coloured pencils on tracing paper]



Figure 4.20 Stewart, M. 2013. Paper puppet of police dog [black card and split-pins]

Animating the walk cycle of the dog was different to the human figures, as unlike the dog, these puppets were animated to move forwards across the space, whereas the dog walked on the spot. To achieve the illusion of the dog walking through space, the background was moved incrementally, thus creating the effect of the dog walking forwards. To achieve a fluid walk cycle, I had to map out the position of each paw during the walk cycle on the animating table (Fig. 4.21). The tape measure, evident at the bottom of the image on the animating table, was used to move the background the same distance for each frame, to ensure smooth movement. The walk cycle of an animal is very different to that of a human, as most animals walk on all fours. Fortunately, Richard William's diagrammatic explanations of various gaits of animals (horses, dogs and cats, for example) were extremely helpful in creating the walk cycle for this puppet (Williams 2001: 330).

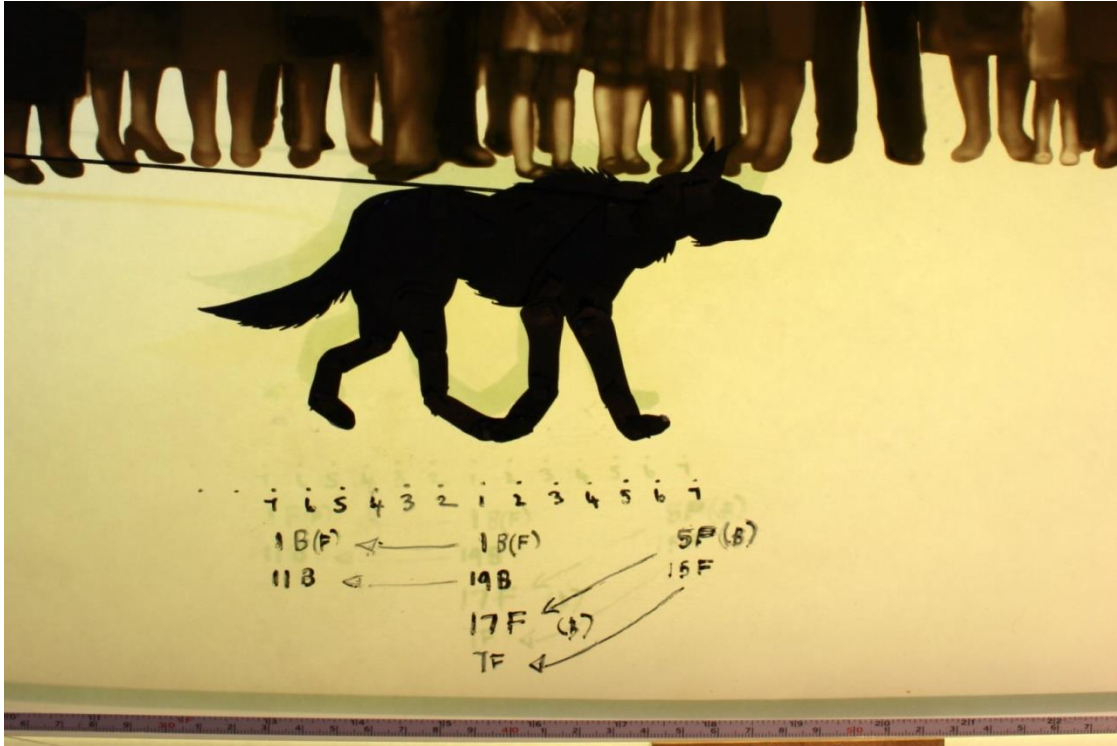


Figure 4.21 Stewart, M. 2013. Animating table showing dog puppet and diagram of the dog walk cycle [black card and split-pins; digital drawing]

If I had been working within a digital animating program, such as Macromedia Flash, I would have only needed to animate two steps of the dog’s walk; which I could then have inserted over the background as a ‘looped’ sequence. However, as I was working in the traditional stop-motion way, I had to animate the entire duration of the walk. Hence, as well as plotting the position of each paw during the walk on the animating table, I also had to plot it out in the form of a log to keep track of the motion (see Fig. 4.22).

FRAME DRAGON	115	117	119	121	123	125	127	129	131	133	135	137	139	141	143	145	147	149	151
FRAME CYCLE	18	19	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
FF		5		4		3		2		E									C7
FB		2						C7		6		5		4		3		2	
BF		b		7E								c1		2		3		4	
BB		c1		2		3		4		5		6		7E					
FRAME DRAGON	153	155	157	159	161	163	165	167	169	171	173	175	177	179	181	183	185	187	
FRAME CYCLE	17	18	19	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
FF			5		4		3		2		E								
FB		E		2					C7		6		5		4		3		
BF		5		6		7E							c1		2		3		
BB			c1		2		3		4		5		6		7E				

Figure 4.22 Stewart, M. 2013. Log showing walk cycle of dog puppet [pencil and paper]

As mentioned, the primary source material for the visual and audio production of the *Prologue* was BBC archival footage of Dr HF Verwoerd's state funeral (BBC Archive 1966). The footage provided the visual references for the puppets and for the backgrounds against which the puppets were animated. All the human puppets, the Verwoerd family and the pallbearers, were based on characters from the live footage. Similarly, the backgrounds for this scene were also based on the archival footage. These were a combination of hand-drawn digital imagery and manipulated photographic imagery.



Figure 4.23 Still from Dr HF Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa (1966) [still from BBC archival footage: Dr Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa)



Figure 4.24 Stewart, M. 2013. Still from Prologue scene (*Big Man*): (entourage and military guard) [black card, pen and ink and split-pins; digital drawing]

Fig. 4.23 shows a still from the archival footage of the Verwoerd family arriving at the ceremony. There is a military guard behind them. Fig. 4.24 shows the same scenario but is a still from the cut-out animation. While there are obvious differences between the photographic and the graphic approach of the two images, there are also clear visual similarities. The compositions of the two images (i.e. the positions and stances of the foreground figures, the placement of the car and the military guard in the background) are very similar, although in the animation still, the figures are spatially more distanced from the car and the military guard. This was necessary because the figures needed to be foregrounded due to their importance to the narrative, and due to the fact that visually they would have been lost if they had been placed closer to the military guard. Fig. 4.24 shows a clear influence of the footage in the features, attire and stances of the Verwoerd family. Betsy Verwoerd, the widow of Dr HF Verwoerd, is of particular significance to the funeral narrative and appears in a number of shots in the scene. She was a devoted wife and staunch supporter of Verwoerd's vision of apartheid¹⁵. She is also a poignant figure in the

¹⁵ Betsie Verwoerd remained extremely right-wing throughout the rest of her life. In 1988 she led the 150-year anniversary celebration of the Great Trek, dressed in full Voortrekker garb (to commemorate when the original Afrikaans Voortrekkers left the Cape Colony to escape British rule). She moved to Oranjia in the 1990s, an isolated settlement in the Northern Cape populated by right-wing Afrikaners whose vision was to create an Afrikaner Volkstaat, cut off from the new South Africa. This vision was, of course, never accepted

footage — austere, but clearly grief stricken and having to be supported at times by a woman who may be her daughter, Anna Boshoff (née Verwoerd). I attempted to replicate Betsie Verwoerd’s sorrow and stoicism in the animated scenes, as well as in her facial expressions in the paper cut-out puppets I made of her.

The figures of the pallbearers are also taken from the same archival footage of Verwoerd’s funeral (Fig. 4.25). While the footage did not provide close-ups or detailed visuals of these figures, it was used as the primary source material for the paper cut-out puppets of the pallbearers (Fig. 4.26). The footage provided enough information in terms of facial features and portrayed a sense of gravitas that I attempted to reproduce both within the appearance of the puppets and the animated movement.



Figure 4.25 Still from Dr HF Verwoerd’s Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa (1966) [still from BBC archival footage: Dr Verwoerd’s Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa]

by the new ANC-led South African government. However, the settlement remains a mostly all-white Afrikaner, right-wing community. Betsie Verwoerd remained here until her death in 2000 at the age of 98 (Braid 1997).



Figure 4.26 Stewart, M. 2013. Still from *Big Man* (pallbearers) [black card, pen and ink and split-pins; digital drawing]

4.3 The integration of digital imagery within the cut-out animation process, ‘Prologue’ scene (Dr HF Verwoerd’s funeral)

Primarily, the incorporation of digital imagery in this scene took the form of backgrounds or settings against which to animate the paper puppets. The exception was the digital drawing showing the crowd at the Union Buildings at Dr HF Verwoerd’s state funeral (shown in Fig. 4.27), which has no animated movement. The image shows a panoramic view of the Union Buildings in Pretoria, where the ceremony for Verwoerd’s state funeral took place. It shows invited guests and the arena within which the ceremony for the state funeral was conducted, and where the coffin lay in state before it was taken to Heroes’ Acre cemetery in Pretoria. The large-scale, panoramic view with the massive public presence functions to reveal the historical importance and scale of the event. This particular view, as seen in Fig. 4.27, never existed as a single shot in the footage of the funeral. The image was partly imagined and partly reconstructed from a number of stills from the archival footage (see Fig. 4.28). The drawing was created on a large scale (A0), in a digital drawing program and was labour-intensive. It was the only image in the funeral scene that was not placed on a light box and photographed. Rather, it was exported in its original digital format directly into the editing program during the post-production process.

The other three digital drawings used in this scene were all photographed on a light box and used as backgrounds against which the paper cut-out puppets were moved. The first of these images (see Fig. 4.29) shows a military guard lined up behind a black hearse. The

image shown in Fig. 4.29 is the digital image before it was printed, and Fig. 4.24 (illustrated earlier) shows the same image after it was printed on paper and photographed on a light box with the paper cut-out puppets on top. As seen in Fig. 4.24, this image provided the backdrop for the paper cut-outs of Verwoerd's family members. With the stop-motion software, I was able to create a greater visual cohesion between foreground and background elements within the scene by adjusting the hue and tonal contrasts of the background against that of the digital puppets.

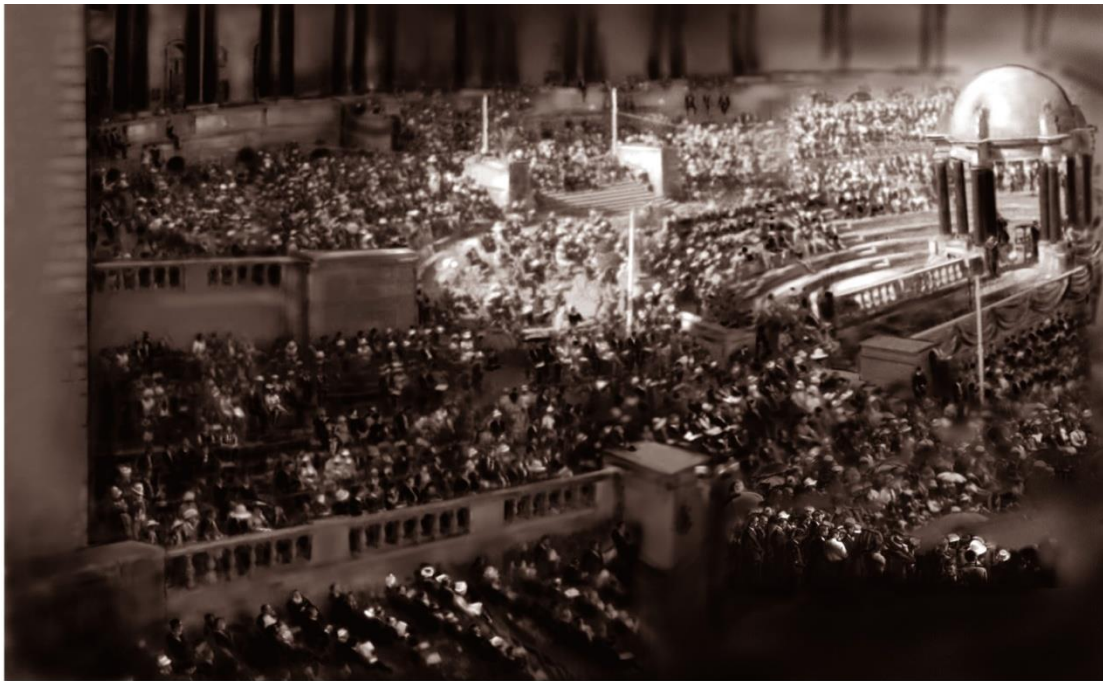


Figure 4.27 Stewart, M. 2013. Digital drawing for Prologue scene (Big Man) (the Union Buildings, Pretoria) [digital drawing]

As with the panoramic shot of the Union Buildings, the primary motivation for the subject matter of this background image was to establish the setting and to reinforce the historical importance of the event. The presence of a military guard in this shot marks the significance of the event. Fig. 4.30 shows the stills I referred to when creating this image (BBC Archive 1966). The social and historical significance of the event is also revealed in the crowd scene background showing people lined up to watch the funeral procession (see Fig. 4.31). Again, this image was influenced by BBC archival footage of Verwoerd's funeral (BBC Archive 1966). This is a digital drawing created in a digital drawing program

in much the same way as the previous two backgrounds. This was the most time consuming and detailed background to produce, due to the detailed rendering of the crowd members. The image was also made on a large scale (A0) which, like the military guard background (see Fig. 4.29), was done to accommodate zooming without a noticeable loss of image quality.



Figure 4.28 Still from Dr HF Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa (1966) [digital still from BBC archival footage: Dr Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa)



Figure 4.29 Stewart, M. 2013. Digital drawing for Prologue scene (Big Man) (car and military guard) [black card, pen and ink and split-pins; digital drawing]



Figure 4.30 Still from Dr HF Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa (1966) [digital still from BBC archival footage: Dr Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa)



Figure 4.31 Stewart, M. 2013. Digital drawing of crowd scene for Prologue scene (Big Man) [digital drawing]

This image provided the backdrop for the funeral procession showing the Verwoerd family members (see Fig. 4.32), the pallbearers with Verwoerd's coffin (see Fig. 4.33) and the police dog following the procession (see Fig. 4.34). Also, at one point in the scene BJ Vorster is seen following at a distance behind the Verwoerd family members (see Fig. 4.35). As with the other background images, this image is not animated. It shows a frozen moment in time, or a snapshot of the crowd on that day, with each posture revealing the individual reactions to the event. Each person was taken from individuals in the stills from the footage, and none are imagined, even though the finer details had to be added and imagined. This image, like the other background images, was created on a large scale. A primary reason for creating such a large background of the crowd scene was to allow for as much versatility with this image as possible. I wanted to use various sections in certain shots and to zoom into some areas without a loss of image quality. Fig. 4.35 shows the shot where BJ Vorster enters the scene for the first time. This is a zoomed-in shot of the crowd and of Vorster's head and shoulders. In Fig. 4.34 of the dog, just the feet and legs of the crowd are visible, whereas in some shots of the pallbearers a more expansive view of the crowd is shown.



Figure 4.32 Stewart, M. 2013. Still from Prologue scene (Big Man) (entourage) [black card, pen and ink and split-pins; digital drawing]



Figure 4.33 Stewart, M. 2013. Still from Prologue scene (Big Man) (pallbearers) [black card, pen and ink and split-pins; digital drawing]



Figure 4.34 Stewart, M. 2013. Still from Prologue scene (Big Man) (dog) [black card, split-pins; digital drawing]



Figure 4.35 Stewart, M. 2013. Still from Prologue scene (Big Man) (BJ Vorster) [black card, pen and ink and split-pins; digital drawing]

The final background created for the scene of Verwoerd's funeral was an image showing a portion of Heroes' Acre cemetery in Pretoria, where Verwoerd was buried (Fig. 4.36). I found the footage of Heroes' Acre in the BBC archival footage of Verwoerd's funeral difficult to use as source material for a background because of the angle at which it was shot (see Fig 4.37). The footage was shot from above, looking down on the funeral procession, which would have been difficult to incorporate into the paper cut-out scene. Paper cut-out forms are most easily animated in profile against frontal backgrounds; hence,

I had to re-create a frontal view of Heroes' Acre that did not exist in the archival footage. I included, behind the silhouetted drawing of the trees in the foreground, an image of Heroes' Acre created from photographic sources which I reworked to give the effect of an old photograph. This visual approach, using silhouetted drawings against digitally manipulated photographic references, echoes the visual style of the backgrounds used in subsequent digitally animated scenes of the film. These scenes also utilise silhouetted foregrounds and animated figures. So while the digital and traditional paper cut-out approaches greatly differ, I was very conscious of retaining a visual cohesion between these scenes.



Figure 4.36 Stewart, M. 2013. Digital image for Prologue scene (Big Man) (Heroes' Acre) [digital drawing]



Figure 4.37 Still from Dr HF Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa (1966) [digital still from BBC archival footage: Dr Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa]

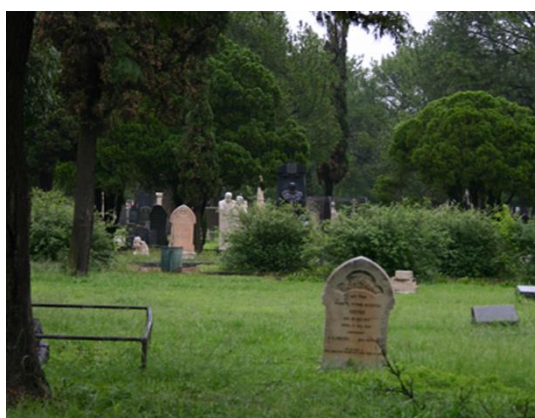


Figure 4.38 Found photographs of Heroes' Acre (2012) [Online] Available: <http://ts4.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.607991666614800156&w=198&h=146&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7> (Accessed 12.09.2012)

Once placed on the light box the visual effect of this background is markedly different to the digital image seen in Fig. 4.36. I deliberately created a light background to enhance the glow caused by the light box. This light against the silhouetted trees gives the impression of a late afternoon; metaphorically evoking Verwoerd's death and the symbolic end of his time in office (see Fig. 4.39). The light also diffused the background details of the image, giving the quality of an old, faded, sepia-tinted photograph. This effect was created deliberately, to evoke a sense of the past or a memory of a historical event.

The final shot in Verwoerd's funeral scene is a zoomed-in shot with BJ Vorster against this background (see Fig 4.40). The shot dwells on Vorster as he comes to a standstill and

watches the funeral procession as it exits the frame. This shot establishes his importance in the film, and establishes the context for the subsequent scene which shows him coming to power.



Figure 4.39 Stewart, M. 2013. Still from Prologue scene (Big Man) (entourage at Heroes' Acre) [black card, pen and ink and split-pins; digital drawing]



Figure 4.40 Stewart, M. 2013. Still from Prologue scene (Big Man) (BJ Vorster at Heroes' Acre) [black card, pen and ink and split-pins, digital drawing]

4.4 The combination of frame-by-frame, paper-based and cel animation and paper cut-out animation in the ‘Prologue’ scene (BJ Vorster’s inauguration speech)

Paper-based frame-by-frame animation (which preceded cel animation) was used during the early development of animation by animators such as Windsor McCay in *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914) and his animated version of *Little Nemo* (1911). This process involves the drawing of motion, frame-by-frame, onto paper. With traditional cel animation, the animator’s frame-by-frame drawings are transposed onto transparent celluloid or acetate sheets. Once painted or coloured, these are photographed against backgrounds one by one. This was the process used for much of the animated film of the 20th century and one that was perfected by the early Disney animators such as Frank Thomas, Ollie Johnston, Fred Moore, Ward Kimball and Milt Kahl (Barrier 2003: 269–273). A reason why this process dominated the animation industry is that it lends itself to “an assembly-line method of production” (Furniss 1998: 18). So while the visual and conceptual planning of the animation and the drawing of the primary movement is complex and labour intensive, and can only be created by a few skilled animators, the more repetitive and less demanding aspects of the process (such as colouring cels) can be distributed to many, less skilled workers.

While I drew on both these paper-based and cel-animation traditions for the excerpt of BJ Vorster’s inaugural speech, I developed a more expressive, less rigid and more integral approach to these traditions. In the second shot of this scene, for example, my approach involved a combination of frame-by-frame drawings made into paper cut-outs which conveyed simple movement. These frame-by-frame segments contained ‘open’ forms that were not jointed but added to the movement of the jointed puppets (see Fig 4.41) to create a greater dynamism within the animated movement. The initial shots of this scene required the paper cut-out puppet of Vorster to move from a frontal position to a partial side view. Thus, to show Vorster’s head and torso rotating on its axis, I had to include frame-by-frame drawings which I made into cut-outs, and integrated these with the movement of the jointed puppet.

This shot was constructed with close reference to the original archival footage of this event, as can be seen in Fig. 4.43, which shows a still from this footage. As is seen in Fig.

4.41, the heads were not joined to the neck, as with the articulated joints of the puppets in the funeral procession. The hands were approached in the same way as the heads, where I created a series of different hands to show a change in movement, rotation and angle. Similarly, I made five different segments of the collar and tie, showing the changes in angle that would occur with the rotation of the torso. However, I never created more than one torso, as when the frames are in movement the changing angles of the collar and tie segments give the illusion of the torso turning. I was able to move the torso from side to side, as it was a separate piece to the legs. Fig. 4.41 shows the nature and direction of movement for the head, torso, arms and hands. The heads and collar and tie segments have been placed in the same sequence and angle that they would have been placed on the animation table when creating this scene. The placement of the hands in this diagram indicates the arc of movement of the arms as they wave.



Figure 4.41 Stewart, M. 2012. Paper cut-out puppet of BJ Vorster, with additional segments showing direction of movement [black card, pen and ink and split-pins]

In the animated version the paper cut-out figure of Vorster is set against a digital image showing a portion of the entrance and steps of the Union Buildings. A digital drawing of microphones is in front him (see Fig. 4.42). (This drawing was created on a transparent layer in Photoshop and was composited into the scene during the editing phase). The

movement in this shot is simple - Vorster waves to the (unseen) crowd in front of him, turning slightly to the left and then to the right.



Figure 4.42 Stewart, M. 2012. Still from Prologue scene (Big Man) (BJ Vorster on the steps of the Union Buildings) [black card, pen and ink and split-pins, digital drawing]



Figure 4.43 Still from archival footage (BJ Vorster on the steps of the Union Buildings) (1966) [digital image]



Figure 4.44 Stewart, M. 2013. Torso and legs of paper cut-out puppet of BJ Vorster [black card and split-pins]

Evident in Fig. 4.44 is the underlay I used to place the heads on. Without this the dark tone of the top of the jacket would have shown through each head due to the lighting beneath. This image also shows the separation of the torso and legs of the puppet. This allowed for slight rotations from side-to-side. The arms were joined and articulated at the elbow and shoulder to allow for the ‘wave’ movement.

In the closing shot of this scene, the excerpt from Vorster’s inaugural speech, I needed to convey speech by using animated movement. This is shown in the film as a zoomed-in shot showing the microphones and Vorster’s head and shoulders. This is where he utters the closing sentences of his inaugural speech

Let me say in conclusion, that as far as I’m concerned, when I’ve said I want to walk the road of Dr Verwoerd, I also want to walk on that road which impelled him to promote national unity. It will be my aim and object as it was his. I ask ladies and gentlemen, your support, not for my sake, but for the sake of South Africa, our

Fatherland. (BBC Archive 1966)

It is clear in these last few phrases of his speech that Vorster aims to ‘walk in the footsteps of Dr Verwoerd’, and that he will continue to support and work toward Verwoerd’s apartheid vision, thus revealing his determination to further the aims of apartheid.

To convey complex mouth movement synchronised to the spoken word using the paper cut-out process would have been very difficult. I thus chose a method of cel animation by which I animated the movement of the mouth frame-by-frame and overlaid these frame-by-frame drawings onto cut-outs of Vorster’s head. Instead of tracing directly onto acetate, I pasted my paper-based; frame-by-frame drawings of the mouth onto pieces of acetate, which in turn were placed over the paper cut-out heads (see Figs 4.45–4.47).



Figure 4.45 Stewart, M. 2013. Head segments created for BJ Vorster’s inaugural speech [card, paper, split-pins, pen and ink]

This method enabled me to develop a shorthand method of animating, whereby I created 32 heads describing the movement of Vorster’s head (moving up and down, and from side to side) and 480 frame-by-frame (pen and ink) drawings of his mouth movement (which

was synced to the audio clip of his spoken words). I thus was able to use one head, which I was able to tilt in various directions, for up to 20 frames. I was also able to reuse heads during the cycle of movement.

I created the drawings of the mouth and head movement on tracing paper so the drawings would merge when overlaid. I pasted the heads onto white card to give the drawings a solidity or opaqueness once placed on the light box and to prevent the bottom lighting from soaking up the drawn detail. Fig. 4.45 shows a light box image of most of the heads used in this cycle of movement. Also evident here are the visual differences that occur when the tracing paper drawings are placed directly onto the light box (as seen in the bottom row of heads) and when the drawings are underlain with white card before being placed onto the light box. Fig. 4.46 shows an example of some of the mouth segments that were painted onto tracing paper. The entire puppet (as seen in Fig. 4.47) with all its parts and overlays (including the digital drawing of the microphones that was overlaid at the post-production phase) was then placed against the background, which appears as a shadowed area. This was the most labour intensive and perhaps most ambitious section of the entire film, even though it lasts for just under 45 seconds.

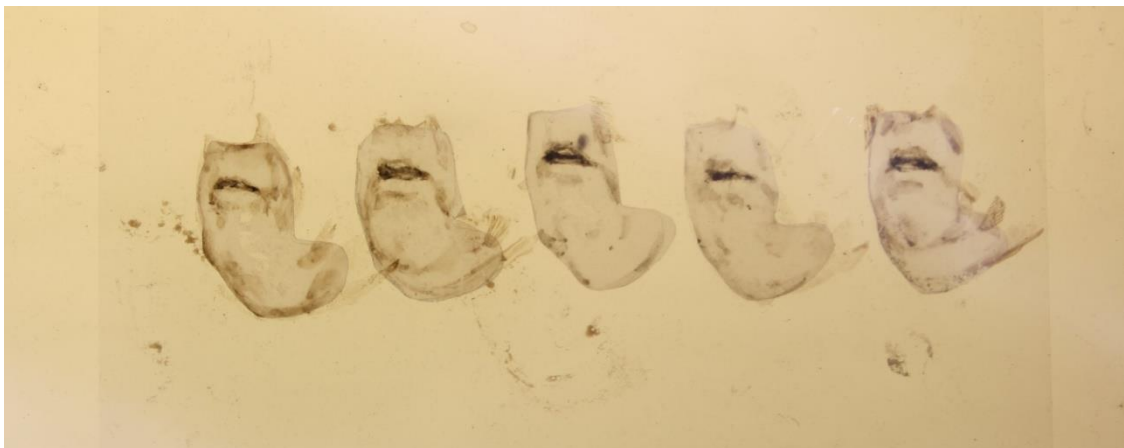


Figure 4.46 Stewart, M. 2013. Examples of mouth segments created for BJ Vorster's inaugural speech [pen and ink on tracing paper]



Figure 4.47 Stewart, M. 2013. Images of the various layers that made up the puppet used for BJ Vorster's inaugural speech [card, paper, split-pins, pen and ink]

This idea of animating portions of the face within the face itself was influenced by a similar (but somewhat more complex) animation technique exemplified by Norstein, who is best known for his animated shorts *The Hedgehog in the Fog* (1975) and *Tale of Tales*

(1979). Norstein has worked with the traditional paper cut-out technique since the 1960s and continues to work with the process today, unaided by digital technology. Norstein's paper cut-out animation is meticulously crafted and detailed. Each puppet can consist of numerous movable celluloid parts, which allows for extremely realistic movement. In spite of his active refusal to use the digital platform to speed up his process, he is still revered as an animator and is regarded as an innovator of the paper cut-out process: "His characters, mostly cut-out puppets, are delicate figures of texture and form, inscrutably built, existing in some fascinating limbo between two and three dimensions. He is first among equals in a long line of Russian geniuses of animation" (Carter 2010).

I was particularly taken with the way in which he animated the face of the central character in his film *The Overcoat* (1981) (see Fig. 4.48). In a short documentary on the film, he demonstrates this process. His characters are made up of small pieces of celluloid which he moves with a pair of tweezers (Madden 2010) (see Fig. 4.49). The undersides of the celluloid pieces have thin sheets of aluminium glued to them to prevent the celluloid from shrinking under the heat of the lights. To create the character, the cels are painted white, and then the details are painted on with Aquarelle (Furniss 1999: 45–46). This allows for detailed facial expression and movement. My interpretation of this technique was much less detailed than Norstein's and closer to the traditional cel animation technique, but it gave me the impetus to create a 'talking head' using a combination of the paper cut-out process and frame-by-frame cel animation.



Figure 4.48 Norstein, Y. 1985. Still from the *Overcoat* [Online] Available: <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/2b/b0/00/2bb0003fec4c0f7e7c7e83b9d47bbe01.jpg> (Accessed 7.06.2016)



Figure 4.49 Norstein, Y. 1985. Norstein demonstrating his technique of animating with small pieces of celluloid (used in *The Overcoat*) [Online] Available: <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/o-7D4x5UalE/hqdefault.jpg> (Accessed 7.06.2016)

To a lesser extent, another animator I looked at for this scene was Eugene Fedorenko, in

particular the paper cut-out animation technique he used in his 1999 film *Village of Idiots* (directed by Fedorenko and Rose Newlove) (see Fig. 4.50). Like Norstein, Fedorenko also uses a meticulous, layered paper cut-out technique which he animated on layers of glass. The effect, like Norstein's, is a seamless and impressive articulation of movement. As with Norstein, I was also drawn to the painterly, graphic visual approach Fedorenko used in this film, as well as his use of collage elements to animate sections of the face and body. However, my technique was nothing as complex and subtle as either Fedorenko's or Norstein's.

I created a much cruder short-hand version of both these approaches, mostly due to the fact that I had no-one to assist with the process, and thus making the cut-out segments any more complex would have added too much to the labour. I also believe this approach to cut-out animation (as exemplified in this case by Norstein and Fedorenko) allows one to access a more graphic and painterly approach to movement and is well suited to 'fine art' animation or animation that explores the traditional fine art processes of painting and drawing.



Figure 4.50 Fedorenko, E. 1999. Still from *Village of Idiots* [Online] Available: <http://www.awn.com/oscars00/images/village00.gif> (Accessed 7.06.2016)

4.5 The integration of digital imagery, 'Prologue' scene

In the shots of the excerpt of Vorster's acceptance speech, the background digital image showing the entrance to the Union Buildings in Pretoria was created in much the same way

as the panoramic view of the Union Buildings and funeral crowd in the opening shot. The image was sourced from BBC archival footage and was reconstructed using digital drawing and digital manipulation (see Fig. 4.51 and Fig. 4.52). The SAUK emblem on the microphones needed to be clear and legible. The SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) was officially known in its Afrikaans context, as the SAUK (Suid-Afrikaanse Uitsaaikorporasie), during this period¹⁶, whereas post-apartheid it is known in terms of the English translation, as the SABC. For many people during the apartheid era, the SAUK emblem was almost synonymous with the then ruling National Party. The SAUK was entirely controlled by the National Party from 1948 (when it was limited to radio broadcasting) into the late 1980s. Television was only introduced to South Africa in 1976, and was heavily censored and known for its bias toward the ruling National Party.

¹⁶ At one point, the National Party MP, Piet Meyer, who was chairman of the SAUK from 1960–1980, was also chairman of the *Broederbond*, “a semi-secret organisation set up to advance the interests of Afrikanerdom”. Meyer is quoted as saying to the general council of the *Broederbond* in 1977: “We must harness all our communication media in a positive way in order to gather up Afrikaner national political energy in the struggle for survival in the future [...] our members must play a leading role!” (Zille 2008). Many of the senior management of the SAUK during this period were members of the *Broederbond* and were harnessed from staunch Afrikaans establishments such as Stellenbosch University in the Cape (Wilkins & Strydom 1978: 38).

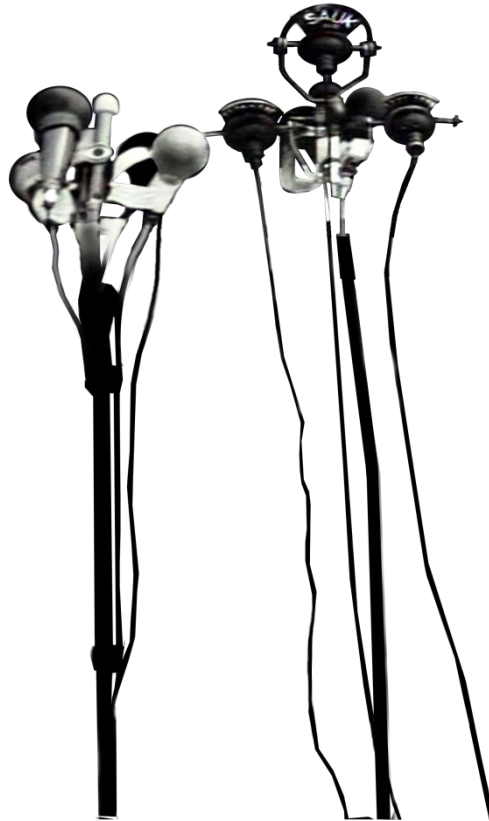


Figure 4.51 Stewart, M. 2013. Digital drawing of microphones for Prologue scene (Big Man) [digital drawing]

The background image showing the entrance and steps to the Union Buildings was created in much the same way as most of the other backgrounds in the paper cut-out animation scenes. It is a heavily manipulated digital image that combines digital drawing and digital manipulation tools. I used the archival still seen earlier in Fig. 4.43 as the basis for this image. The greatest difficulty was digitally removing the crowd behind BJ Vorster. Fig. 4.52 shows the digital image before it had been printed and placed on the light box, while Fig. 4.42 shows the background image as it appears in the animation. In this shot Vorster is seen waving to the (unseen) South African crowd. Although it is short (around four seconds), a fairly substantial amount of work went into animating the shot. Even though it lasts just a few seconds, it was important to include this expansive shot of Vorster on the steps of the Union Buildings, as it is an iconic image and moment within South African history. It shows Vorster presenting himself to the South African public, the media, and the broader international community as the new Prime Minister of South Africa, just thirteen days after the dramatic events of the assassination of Dr HF Verwoerd. It also shows the

moments before his inaugural speech.



Figure 4.52 Stewart, M. 2013. Digital drawing for Prologue scene (**Big Man**) (**Union Buildings, Pretoria**) [digital drawing]

4.6 The paint-on-glass process, ‘Epilogue’ scene

Creating animations by painting on glass using a stop-motion process was explored during the early development of animation at the beginning of the 20th century. Such an approach was one of a number of experimental animation processes developed mostly by individual artists. Early modernists Walter Ruttmann and Viking Eggeling, for example, created abstract films using stop-motion with oil paint on glass in the early 1920s (Moritz 1997: 224). These artists were members of the avant-garde who found the added dimension of time and movement (and the associated transformative, abstract and expressive potentials) of early animation appealing (Leslie 2002: 37). According to Esther Leslie in *Hollywood flatlands: Animation, critical theory and the avant-garde* (2002), these painterly experiments in film “surfaced out of the extension of problems posed in the fine arts: how to represent rhythmic processes not just in space and on a flat surface but also in time” (Leslie 2002: 37). While these early experiments were mostly abstract, subsequent animators such as Alexander Petrov and Caroline Leaf have used similar stop-motion, paint-on-glass processes to explore narrative-based film (Furniss 1999: 37, 39). This

section explains the particular paint-on-glass process I used and contextualises it within the tradition of paint-on-glass animation, particularly in terms of the influence of Caroline Leaf's paint-on-glass process. I chose the traditional paint-on-glass animation process as I found it to be an appropriately expressive medium in which portray Vorster's/Nebuchadnezzar's physical and mental degradation that occurs while he is in the wilderness. This section also mentions Joan Gratz's film *Nude Descending the Staircase*, in which she uses a 'clay painting' technique which to some extent also influenced my approach. There are digital drawing programs (such as Corel Paint, Sketchbook Pro and Photoshop) that have drawing and painting tools that emulate painterly effects, but I find these effects lack the authenticity of gesture, texture and luminosity of the painted mark. Neither are they, for my purposes, able to convincingly emulate the visceral nature of the medium. That said, I find these digital applications very useful for creating digital drawings and sketches, where these painterly characteristics do not apply.

In *Big Man*, the paint-on-glass technique used a similar recipe to that used by Caroline Leaf in her animated short film *The Street* (1976). Most interesting to me was the visual effect of Leaf's paint-on-glass film — the visibility of the brush marks, its painterly fluid quality, the sepia tones (a natural effect I realised that occurs when a warm-toned black paint is lit from behind), and the luminosity caused by the backlighting (Fig. 4.53). For her paint-on-glass animations she used a water-based paint mixed with an oil-based product to slow down the drying process (Furniss 1999: 39). I opted for gouache and glycerine. Glycerine is an oil-based medium that extends the drying time of the paint, thus keeping it malleable. I created the animation on a light box in a darkened room. I painted on milky Perspex using rags, ear buds, paint brushes and tooth picks. The process I used was very much like that of mono-printing, in that it too involves reductive and additive techniques. Fortunately Leaf demonstrates this particular process in a short film called *Hand-crafted cinema animation workshop with Caroline Leaf* (Roberts 1998), which was very helpful. Fig 4.54 shows Leaf at work on two of her paint-on-glass animated films (*The Street* and *Interview*). It shows her light box setup and animating table, as well her process. As can be seen in these images, the paint-on-glass process is very hands-on and involves both adding and taking paint away. I began with the Perspex painted black and then brought out the form by taking paint away. In this way one works from light to dark, for as one removes paint the light from the light box is exposed. I was also able to bring back form and tone by painting back onto the Perspex. As with the paper cut-out animation approach, the

procedure was facilitated by the stop-frame application Dragon StopMotion Pro. I was able to work directly within an animation timeline, and was able to use the onion-skinning feature to my advantage, and thus was able to go back and correct errors. Traditionally, this process was done 'blindly', and one could not go back during the process and correct or rework the previous frame or shot.



Figure 4.53 Leaf, C. 1976. Still from *The Street* [Online] Available: http://carolineleaf.com/images/Filmography/The_Street_2.jpg (Accessed 7.06.2016)



Figure 4.54 Leaf, C. 1976 and 1979. Caroline leaf at work on *The Street* and *The Interview* [Online] Available: http://www.carolineleaf.com/direct_animation.php (Accessed 7.06.2016)

The malleable qualities of this painterly technique suited the subject matter, as it is in this scene that BJ Vorster mutates from a man to a wild beast. The scene begins with Vorster fully clothed (although he has already lost his hat and umbrella) and as it unfolds he gradually loses his clothes until he is completely naked. Toward the end of the scene he has taken on a beastly form. The film ends with the screaming head of the ‘beast-like’ Vorster mutating back into a portrait of his former self. From there Vorster’s head metamorphoses into each head (in turn) of all the subsequent South African heads of state from Vorster up to the incumbent Jacob Zuma (see Fig. 4.57 and Fig. 4.58). While the imagery in this scene retains a sense of naturalism, the approach to the spatial reality gradually becomes dislocated and removed from the real world, indicative of Vorster’s/Nebuchadnezzar’s state of mind. This evocation of unreality comes to a climax with Vorster becoming beast-like, and culminates with his head changing into the subsequent heads of state. Traditionally, metamorphosis in film or animation has been used to suggest a shift into fantasy or into a psychological realm (Furniss 1999: 78). Similarly, the use of metamorphosis at this point of the film was to signify Vorster’s altered state of mind and to show, at the end of the film,

the change from one political dispensation to another, in the metamorphosis of one head of state into another.

The animation process in the *Epilogue* scene moves from frame-by-frame animation to a combination of frame-by-frame animation and time-lapse painting. This approach was influenced by Joan Gratz's animated film, *Mona Lisa Descending a Staircase* (1992). In this film, she uses a clay painting technique she pioneered, where she merges the works (mostly portraits and the human figure) of thirty-five famous artists using a combination of time lapse, metamorphosis and frame-by-frame movement. Much like the paint-on-glass process I used (and exemplified by the films of Leaf and Kentridge), each frame in Gratz's film is altered and ultimately destroyed in the creation of the next frame (Purves 2010: 138). Of particular interest to me was the way in which Gratz combined the merging or metamorphosis of one image into another with animated movement (see Fig. 4.55). The animated movement was partially created by her choice of images. For example, in her merging of three self-portraits by Vincent Van Gogh she shows a gradual movement from a frontal position to a three-quarter profile (see Fig 4.56). This gives the impression of the face turning to face the viewer. Another method she uses is to insert animated movement within the merging of images. For instance, when she merges Paul Gauguin's *Spirit of the Dead* (1892) with Edvard Munch's *Puberty* (1894–5), the figure in Gauguin's image rises from the bed to assume the seated position of the figure in Munch's painting.

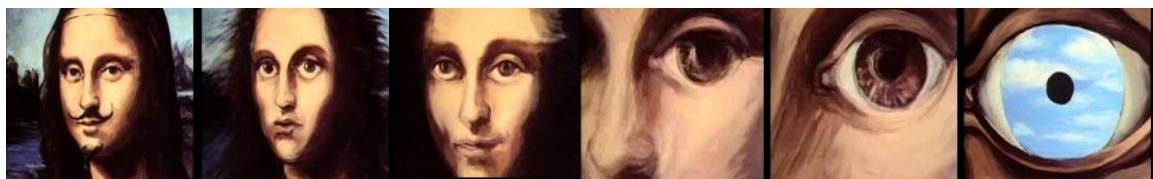


Figure 4.55Gratz, J. 1992. Stills from *Mona Lisa Descending the Stairs* [Online], Available: <http://linesandcolors.com/2006/07/30/joan-c-gratz/> (Accessed 7.06.2016)



Figure 4.56 Gratz, J. 1992. Stills from *Mona Lisa Descending the Stairs* [Online] Available: <http://www.akbanksanat.com/images/default-source/festival-filmleri/a3—mona-lisa-descending-a-staircase.jpeg?sfvrsn=0> (Accessed 7.06.2016)



Figure 4.57 Stewart, M. 2013. Paint-on-glass stills from *Epilogue scene (Big Man)* [gauche and glycerine on glass]

Similarly, in the *Epilogue* scene the portraits of the heads of state not only transform from one to another, through a time-lapse approach, but also include movement. This can be seen in PW Botha's wagging finger, the closing eyes of various heads, the changing smiles of FW De Klerk and Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki's hand movement, and finally Jacob Zuma raising his finger to his slips. The source images for the creation of the portraits were found media images (see Fig. 4.59). I referred to these to create the likeness to each head of state and to give me an idea of the nature of the movement I could incorporate. For the movement of the various hands, I used a mirror and observed my own hand movements. As well as being influenced by Gratz's approach to movement, I was also influenced by the implied movement of Francis Bacon's painted portraits. His portraits, though static images, suggest faces in movement. The distortions of his portraits are not unlike the affects that can occur when blurred movement is captured photographically in one image. Bacon achieves a similar effect with the drag of his brush that cuts through, mutates and blurs form. Movement in Bacon's work is further suggested by the sequential nature of many of his paintings, particularly those which he presents in the triptych format (see Fig. 4.61). In these triptychs, movement is not only suggested in the dissolution and abstractions of the still image, but also in the sequential juxtaposition of the heads, which show changes in rotation and angle. Similar distortions and blurring of movement occur naturally in the time-lapse painting process. This can be seen in Fig. 4.60, which is a sequence showing the frame-by-frame transformation of the head of BJ Vorster into that of PW Botha.



Figure 4.58 Stewart, M. 2013. Paint-on-glass stills from Epilogue scene (Big Man) [gauche and glycerine on glass]



Figure 4.59 Found media photographs of South African heads of state (nd) [digital images]

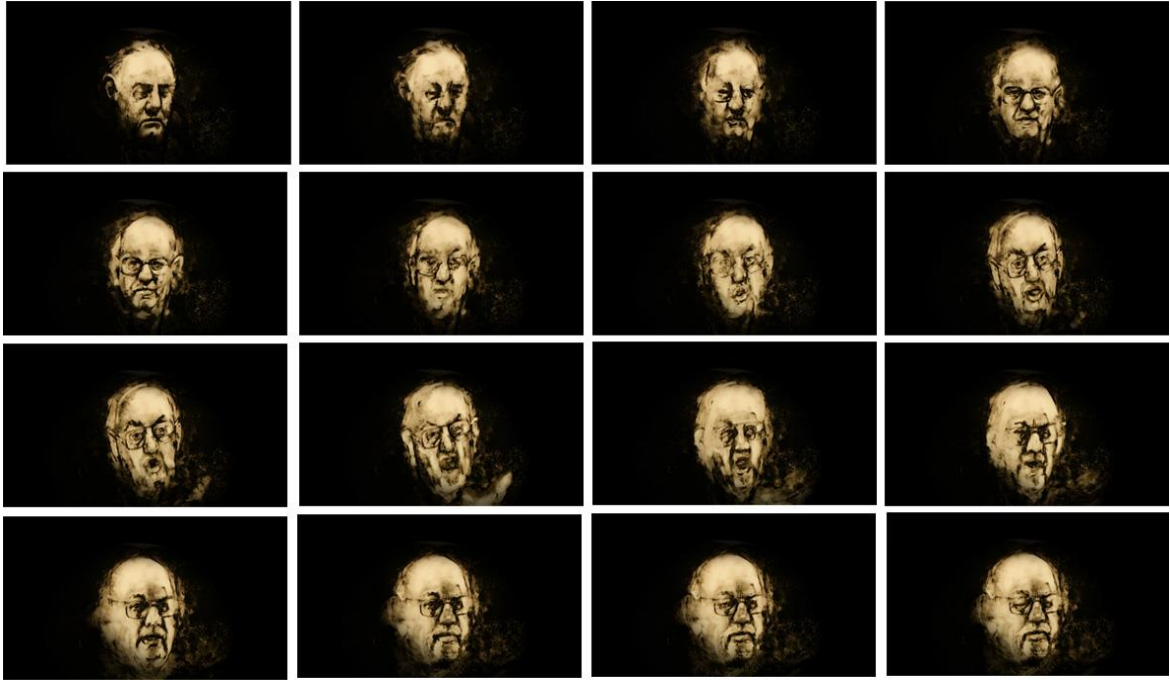


Figure 4.60 Stewart, M. 2013. Paint-on-glass stills from Banishment scene, Big Man [gauche and glycerine on glass]



Figure 4.61 Bacon, F. 1964. Three Studies for George Dyer [Online] Available: <http://www.artmarketmonitor.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Francis-Bacon-Three-Studies-for-Portrait-of-George-Dyer-on-light-ground-15-20m-GBP.jpg> (Accessed 7.06.2015)

4.7 The integration of the paint-on-glass approach with live footage, 'Banishment' scene

At the editing phase I interspersed the paint-on-glass segments with live footage of the landscape around the Rhodes Memorial, as well as of the Rhodes Memorial itself. The live footage was edited and composited into the paint-on-glass animation scenes. The footage

importantly documents specific landmarks, such as the deserted zoo with its abandoned lion's den, and the Rhodes Memorial with its monumental lion and equestrian statues. Both these landmarks resonate with the biblical narrative and reflect the wilderness to which Vorster/Nebuchadnezzar is banished; as well as the beastly state he becomes reduced to. The motivation for including this particular footage as the 'wilderness' into which Vorster/Nebuchadnezzar is banished was that this is a place that Vorster would have been familiar with. As the South African Prime Minister from 1966 to 1978, Groote Schuur was his home for more than a decade. He would thus have been familiar with the surrounding Groote Schuur estate and its landmarks.

The footage was shot (and later further edited) to portray the journey through Vorster's eyes, and is intended to evoke the idea of Vorster walking, stumbling and crawling through the landscape over a length of time. The edited footage was dispersed between paint-on-glass animated shots of Vorster (first losing his shirt, then crawling semi-clothed, then urinating, then crawling on all fours completely naked, and finally in his beast-like form). The first landmark to be documented was the deserted zoo, which includes a lion's den, in the upper part of Groote Schuur estate¹⁷. The raw footage documents the short walk to the entrance to the zoo, and with it the surrounding landscape (including the view of the Devil's Peak), and the stone remnants of stairs, walls and other stone structures that have gone to ruin. Still largely intact are the lion's den and the animal cages, although they are deserted and completely overgrown (see Fig. 4.62).

¹⁷ The lion's den was established by Rhodes around 1902 after he was given two lions and a leopard as a gift. Over time more animals were introduced and it was a functioning zoo right up until the 1970s (Simons 2002: 41). Rhodes always opened Groote Schuur estate to the public and it remained so for many years after his death. However, after the assassination of Dr HF Verwoerd in 1966 and until the 1980s, the house and garden became closed to the public (Simons 2002: 44).



Figure 4.62 Stills from footage of Grootte Schuur estate showing the abandoned lion’s den and the surrounding landscape (2009) [digital still, personal footage]

Finding the deserted zoo and with the lion’s den was fortuitous in relation to the biblical narrative of the film. In *The Book of Daniel*, chapter six tells the story of “Daniel in the Lion’s Den”. This event occurs after the story of Nebuchadnezzar, during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar’s son Balthazar’s predecessor, King Darius. Daniel is thrown into the lion’s den for praying to God in defiance of King Darius’s decree that no man was to pray to any god or thing other than the king for 30 days. Daniel survives unharmed, protected by his faith in God (Daniel 6:19–23). While this is not Nebuchadnezzar’s story it refers to Daniel, the interpreter of Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams. The imagery of the lion’s den in the film also refers (albeit obliquely) to Daniel’s prediction that Nebuchadnezzar’s successors will not learn from his sins or from his punishment. This is again alluded to at the end of the film when BJ Vorster’s ‘beastly’ face is briefly restored before it metamorphoses into those of his successors. The deserted and derelict zoo is now part of the surrounding wilderness, and is thus an appropriate setting for Vorster to roam around in and become, as Nebuchadnezzar, like a wild animal.

The next landmark is the Rhodes Memorial (see Fig. 4.63). The source footage (and the edited footage) documents the walk from the bottom of the memorial to the top entrance.

From here one can see the paths used to access the foothills of Devil's Peak. In *Big Man*, this is where Vorster ends up and is finally shown in his beast-like form. The footage was substantially edited. I wanted the landscape to be devoid of any human presence other than that of Vorster. Editing people out of the raw footage proved tricky, particularly with the Rhodes Memorial, as there are always tourists and visitors there, even out of season, which was when the footage was first shot in 2009). Rather than trying to remove people from the footage, I mostly used footage from which we managed to omit visitors. In other instances, I was able to zoom into a shot and omit people in that way. Fortunately the zoo (being deserted) is not widely visited and had no visitors on the two occasions on which the footage was shot.

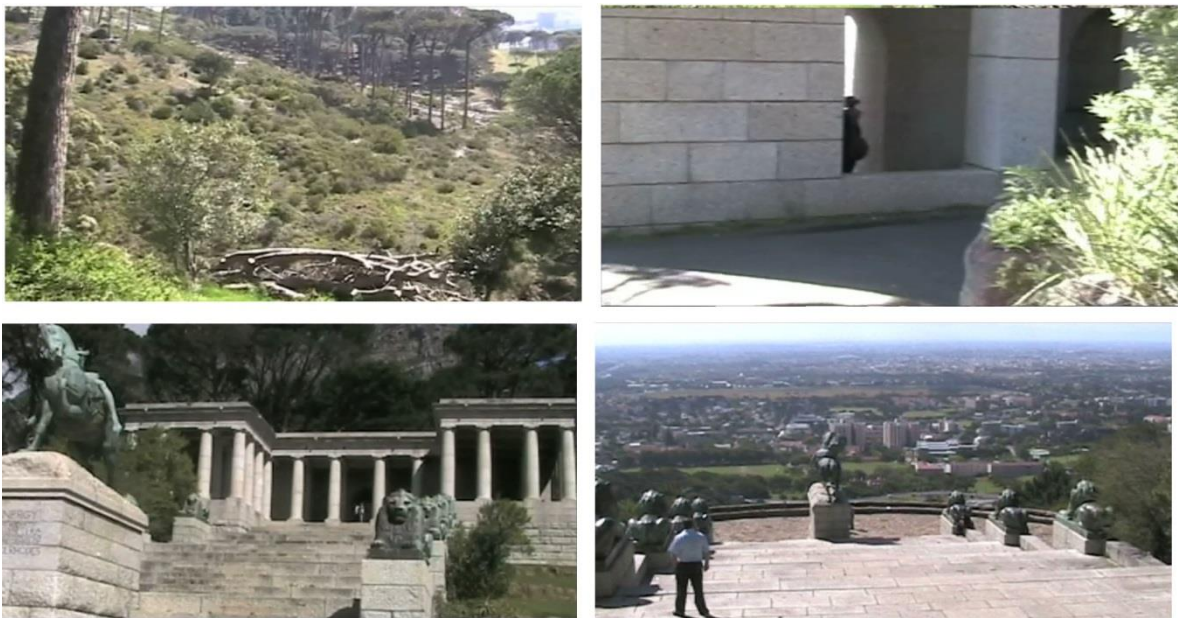


Figure 4.63 Stills from footage of Groote Schuur estate showing the Rhodes Memorial (2009) [digital still, personal footage]

The footage was edited in such a way so as to relate it to the narrative context as well as to the visual aesthetic of the film. In terms of the narrative context, one aim was to evoke the sense of someone moving erratically through the landscape, and this action is intended to be seen through BJ Vorster's eyes, hence the camera-eye view. The footage also needed to visually document Vorster's journey from the lion's den to the top entrance of the Rhodes Memorial, where one also has a view of Devil's Peak. I needed to make the landmarks within the footage (the lion's den, Rhodes Memorial and Devil's Peak) visibly

recognisable to the extent that the viewer could relate the landmarks within the footage to the diagrammatic renditions of the same landmarks on the map shown at the beginning of the film (see Fig. 4.64). The map reveals, by means of schematic drawings of the house at Groote Schuur, the lion's den, Rhodes Memorial, the foothills of Devil's Peak, and an animated dotted line — the journey Vorster takes into the 'wilderness'. The aim of map at this point of the film was to geographically situate the setting of the adapted biblical narrative and the journey into the wilderness.

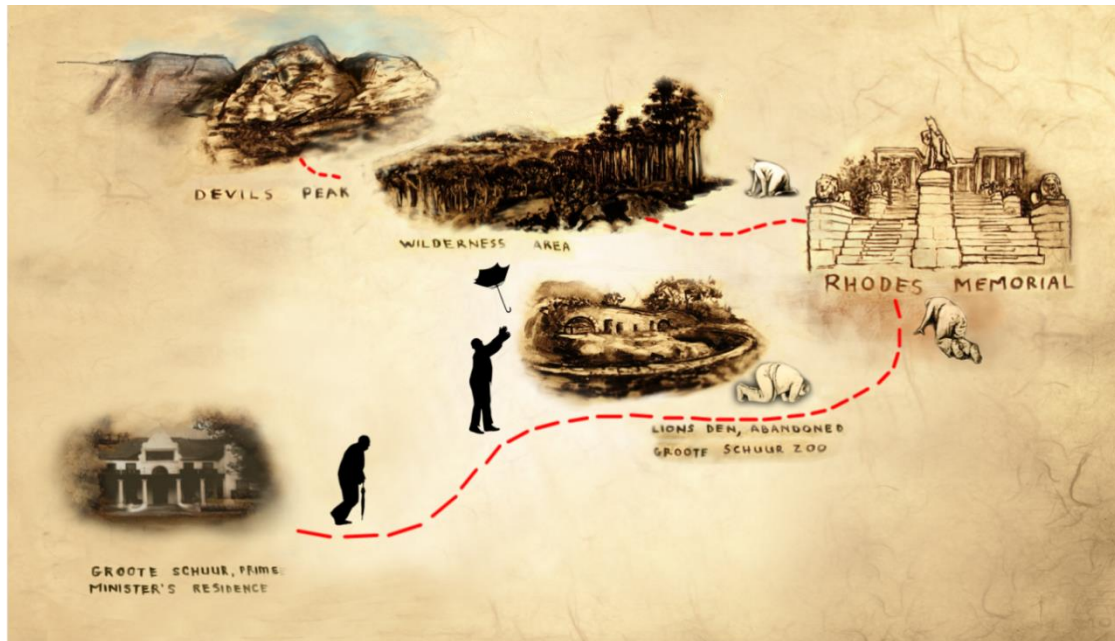


Figure 4.64 Stewart, M. 2014. Still from 'Big Man' of the map that shows Vorster's journey from the house at Groote Schuur to Devil's Peak [gauche and glycerine on glass]

The paint-on-glass segments were juxtaposed between sections of live footage. To visually integrate the figure of Vorster with the live footage of the landscape, I composited him into stills from the footage at the editing phase (see Fig. 4.65). (I found it impossible to harmoniously composite the moving figure of Vorster onto the live footage, and thus opted to use stills from the footage instead). The stills within these sections were selected for their spatial correlation to the various paint-on-glass sequences of Vorster, and for their visual relevance to the journey into the 'wilderness'. I altered the colour, tone and contrast of these stills to relate them to the visual aesthetics of the paint-on-glass segments. I also had to ensure that the photographic stills did not overshadow the figure of Vorster. The best way to achieve this was to have the effect of the figure emerging from the shadows. I had to create the various shadows in Photoshop and add them as an overlay at the editing

phase.

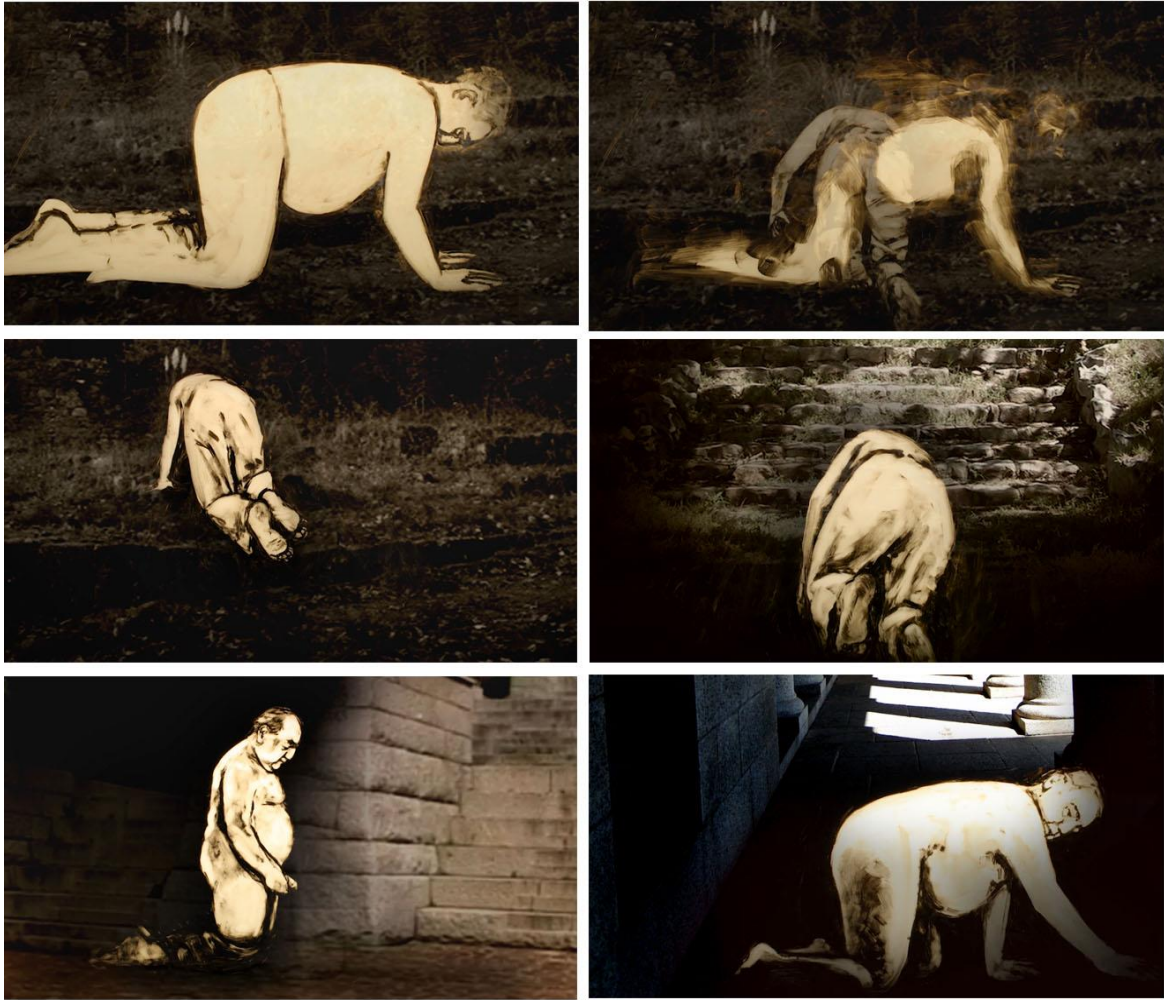


Figure 4.65 Stewart, M. 2014. Still from ‘Big Man’ showing the paint-on-glass figures of BJ Vorster composited onto stills from the live footage [gauche and glycerine on glass, digital manipulated imagery]

In summary, this chapter demonstrates how *Big Man* drew on and adapted where necessary the traditional animation processes of frame-by-frame animation, cel animation and paper cut-out animation, and paint-on-glass animation. It is important to note in this regard that each traditional animation process was chosen for its specific visual characteristics and the affinity of these characteristics to the visual and conceptual content of the scene in which the process was used. The chapter also clarifies the various creative ways in which these traditionally animated scenes integrated digital imagery (both still images and live footage) in both the production and post-production phases of *Big Man*. Lastly, this section acknowledges the usefulness of digital applications and digital technology for the facilitation of traditional animation processes.

CHAPTER 5

THE DIGITAL PLATFORM AND ‘BIG MAN’

5.1 A brief overview

As acknowledged in this study, the digital platform was an invaluable tool for facilitating the traditional animation process *for Big Man* both during and post production. I have also noted the various ways in which the digital platform was accessed in the creation and processing of digital imagery (namely digital drawings and manipulated photographic imagery). This chapter explores those sections of *Big Man* that utilise digital animation processes and approaches. It further explores the ways in which live footage and digital imagery are integrated within the digitally animated scenes. The exploration also considers the visual and stylistic similarities between the digitally and traditionally animated scenes.

The digitally animated scenes predominantly drew on traditional frame-by-frame, hand-drawn animation and puppet animation. While the digital animation was, to an extent, facilitated by digital applications, in principle and application it reflects the traditional versions of these animation processes. Most of the digital animation was done in Macromedia Flash. This included digital puppet animation, frame-by-frame animation, and hand-drawn animation. Some of the frame-by-frame and hand-drawn animated scenes used the more conventional creative imaging applications Corel Painter and Adobe Photoshop.

This chapter also briefly contextualises these applications as “authoring software” (Zagalo & Branco 2015: 11), which means that they provide creative tools and a creative platform which assumes the user has or will need to acquire (basic to advanced) creative knowledge in order to use the applications successfully. These applications are different from Web 2.0 technologies, which provide more than just a creative tool for the user, and also embed creative knowledge within the application, thus catering for the general user (Zagalo & Branco 2015: 12).

5.2 The Flash platform, embedded knowledge, authoring software and digital creativity

Flash animation generally refers to animation made with Adobe's Flash software. The term 'Flash animation' is not only synonymous with the .swf file format that flash animations are distributed as, but also with a particular style of animation. As the Flash platform is vector based, Flash animation as a rule is characterised by simple, clean, closed lines, flat colour and tweened movement. The 'motion tween' is a feature that originated in Flash, and creates automated movement. Instead of having to draw the movement for an object in each frame, a tween allows you to plot the beginning and end of a sequence of movement and the program fills in the movement between these two points.

While Flash is able to integrate video, bitmaps, and other raster-based graphics (which allow for soft tones and textured marks), most animation within the Flash platform, as mentioned, takes the form of vector-based graphics (see Fig. 5.1). While it has enormous time-saving advantages, animators complain of the stylistic limitations of vector-based graphics in Flash. Many animators just want an animating program that integrates traditional drawing and animation approaches. The Canadian animator Michael John Kricfalusi, better known as John K, the creator of *The Ren & Stimpy Show* and *The Ripping Friends* animated series, posits:

I think Flash is a temporary fix. [...] Too many people rely on it to make things mathematically smooth, which to me looks very fake and cold. It ought to be easy to make a program just for animators and build in classic principles, real brush and paint tools to make it easier for us to learn the things that the animators of the 30s took a decade to learn. (Simpson2007)



Figure 5.1An example of pixel-based (A) and vector-based (B) graphics (2014) [digital images] [Online] Available: <http://ts4.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608017938932826729&w=153&h=114&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7;> <http://ts1.mm.bing.net/th?&id=HN.608018548811827397&w=300&h=30>

Over the past decade digital drawing and animation applications have rapidly improved and one can now access applications that include these brush and paint tools, making it possible to create traditional frame-by-frame animation on the digital platform using artistic tools that emulate traditional artistic media. Sketchbook Pro, for example, is a fairly recent application that offers these functions and tools (Autodesk.com 2015). However, even though these tools can replicate the look of traditional paint and drawing media and are extremely useful for many visual approaches (see Fig. 5.1), for some creative tasks, as I have noted previously, I find that such digital tools lack the visceral, authentic quality of real paint and draw media. Nonetheless, such applications do offer an alternative to the vector-based graphics of Flash and certainly have value as animation and drawing applications.

Although I am aware of the shortfalls of Flash animation, I am also interested in the creative potentials of the platform. There have been some Flash-animated films made that stand out visually, technically and stylistically, and that refute the negative connotations associated with so much Flash animation. *Waltz with Bashir*, for example, the Israeli animated film written and directed by Ari Folman, premiered at the 2008 Cannes Film Festival and since then has won and been nominated for many notable awards, including a Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film and an Academy Award nomination. This is a part-fictional, part-autobiographical, documentary-style animation exploring the horrors of the 1982 Lebanese war (see Fig. 5.2).



Figure 5.2Folman, A. 2008. Still from *Waltz with Bashir* [digital image] [Online] Available: <http://ts3.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608027916145790908&w=239&h=133&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7> (Accessed 18.06.2013)

The technique was a combination of frame-by-frame animation and a ‘paper cut-out’ approach similar to that of Yuri Norstein’s in *The Overcoat*, but adapted to the digital platform:

To achieve realism for the faces and bodies, animators broke them into sections and sub-sections. The face was typically divided into 8 sections and each section into 15 sub-sections. [...] In many places, we did the lower part of the body with frame-by-frame classic animation. (Kaufman 2008)

Another innovative animator who has worked with the Flash platform is the Dutch digital artist Han Hoogerbrugge, noted for his early Web-based interactive Flash animations. Hoogerbrugge, originally a painter and cartoonist, gained notoriety in the 1990s for his *Modern Living/Neurotica* series (see Fig. 5.3). This series began as a semi-autobiographical comic strip which Hoogerbrugge adapted to the Internet, first as animated gifs and later as interactive Flash animations. Hoogerbrugge’s Flash animations demonstrate that it is possible to use Flash to create unique imagery that transcends the limitations of the program and that escapes the negative stylistic quirks that typify so much Flash animation. Hoogerbrugge chose Flash because of its interactive tools and because the

vector-based nature appealed to his stripped-down, Hockney-like drawing style that he uses in the interactive, animated works (Frederiks 2012, np).



Figure 5.3 Hoogerbrugge, H. 1999–1995. Still showing interactive interface of Modern Living/Neurotica Series [digital image] [Online] Available: <http://ts3.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608051645836756183&w=235&h=132&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7> (Accessed 18.06.2013)

So, while the Flash platform has limitations, there are artists and animators who have transcended these shortfalls to create highly individualized imagery and innovative film. Aside from the labour-saving potentials of this application, exploring the animations of artists/filmmakers such as Hoogerbrugge and Folman also influenced my decision to work in Flash. Furthermore, for a single individual; making an independent short animated film (particularly one that integrates traditional animation methods) is extremely labour intensive. The paper cut-out scenes took one and a half years to produce, from the creation of the puppets and backgrounds to creating the animated movement. Thus moving to the Flash platform did save on time and labour. This was not the only motivation for using this platform. The stripped down visual aesthetic I was exploring for these particular scenes were suited to vector-based tools in Flash. I felt the film needed scenes with a crisp,

contemporary-looking visual style — one that would visually and historically set these scenes apart from the expressive, hand-made look of the traditional paper cut-out scenes at the beginning of the film.

Flash is a significant creative application in that it falls into the category of “authoring software” (Zagalo & Branco 2015: 11), as do the other creative applications I used such as Adobe Photoshop, Sketchbook Pro and Corel Paint. This means that the application comes with embedded knowledge of programming — most importantly coding and assembler skills. In terms of Flash, this means that the knowledge needed for creating tools for editing, action scripting, drawing and animating, for example, are integrated within the application. This embedded knowledge enables the user to produce creative projects without having to understand or apply programming skills. In the 1980s, in order to create games or applications an individual needed the necessary coding, assembling and programming skills. Authoring software has thus revolutionised and democratised the way in which users access the digital platform. In an application such as Flash, a user can access and integrate multiple media and creative tools with embedded specialist knowledge. The usefulness of this type of creative authoring software means that artists or animators can learn to use the application fairly easily and at the same time apply their own creative knowledge within the application. For example, one can apply traditional drawing and painting skills when using the artistic tools, or a knowledge of creating animated movement using the drawing, motion and tweening tools. One still needs a reasonable level of computer literacy to work with the more complex tools, such as action scripting and the more detailed mapping tools. One also needs literacy within the application to combine elements such as text, images, audio and motion. According to Zagalo and Branco, such engagement with an application is necessary to ensure that the skilled creative user is stimulated and to prevent any inertia or complacency regarding literacy (2015: 13). Applications such as Adobe Photoshop, Sketchbook Pro and Corel Paint therefore assume a certain level of user knowledge and creative ability.

Since the development of authoring software, Web 2.0 technologies have been developed. Web 2.0 tools and applications take embedded knowledge even further in that knowledge of the creative processes is also integrated, thus making it possible for just about anyone to use such applications. Web 2.0 technology has revolutionised the digital platform in that there are now hundreds of free online applications and tools that cater for creative

production and processes. Some common Web 2.0 applications are Picasa (for editing photographs), Sumo Paint (for drawing), SketchUp (for creating 3D environments), AudioTool (for creating and editing music), and GoAnimate (for creating animations) (Zagalo & Branco 2015: 11). These applications are very useful for the general user and make all kinds of creative productions possible. However, the problem with some of these applications (for users with applied skills) is that too much creative knowledge is embedded and one is restricted to using the embedded knowledge rather than one's user knowledge. GoAnimate, for example, is very useful for someone with no animating knowledge who needs to create an animated logo for a business project. One can use the embedded themes, images, text and motion attributes without any knowledge of animation, design, or image and text manipulation. However, such applications can be restrictive for a user with skills and a creative vision, as one is forced to work within the confines of the application's embedded knowledge. In terms of my use of authoring software, as opposed to Web 2.0 technology, the learning experience within these programs was challenging but empowering, as at the end of this process I found that my digital literacy had greatly improved and that I could transfer this literacy and new knowledge to other applications, such as the editing suites AfterEffects and Adobe Premier. I could use and adapt my creative knowledge in a much more individual, flexible and controlled way.

Lev Manovich, in his book *The language of new media: New media aesthetics* (2001), describes the embedded knowledge systems of Web 2.0 technology and authoring software within creative applications (including digital cinema applications) as derivative of many of the creative approaches developed by early 20th-century avant-garde artists. In his essay "Avant-garde as software" Manovich suggests that digital media represents "a new avant-garde for the information society, although it uses old Modernist forms" (2002: 3). Manovich refers particularly to the modernist era of the 1920s, as this time period heralded the era of mass communication in which all of the fundamental visual communication innovations and techniques were developed, including montage (compositing) in film and photography, collage, graphic design, and modern typography. He claims that all of these processes are now integrated within the digital platform, its applications and interface. He uses the example of Vertov's new cinema techniques seen in *Man with a Movie Camera* (montage, juxtaposition, quick cutting, the incorporation of graphic elements and the treatment of type as a graphic element), which he sees as predicting many aspects of digital

cinema technology, aspects which are simulated in creative applications such as Photoshop and AfterEffects. In this regard Manovich posits

The techniques introduced by the modernist avant-garde proved to be sufficiently effective to last for the rest of the century. Mass visual culture only pushes further what was already invented, intensifying particular techniques and mixing them together in new combinations. (2002: 2)

While some commentators agree that Manovich correctly identifies the historical formal influences of these traditional processes on the digital platform (Wells & Hardstaff 2008: 5), they also suggest that his explanation is insufficient in that he is defining a cultural movement by its techniques and processes rather than by “the manner or goals to which they are employed” (Pressman 2014: 10). While I concur that Manovich’s explanation does overlook the more complex aims of modernism, his idea that the formal processes of the avant-garde are re-invented and integrated within the digital platform as embedded knowledge, from a user’s stand point, does hold some credibility. As an individual with applied creative skills one is constantly reminded of these historical echoes. The ‘cut and paste’ commands, for example, as Manovich points out, clearly reference the modernist innovation of collage. The use of layered cels, multi-plane cameras and layered transparencies in early traditional and experimental animation transpose into the use of ‘layers’ and ‘cameras’ in Photoshop and AfterEffects, for example. One can also emulate the back- and top-lighting effects of early silhouette and paper cut-out animation in the same applications. In Flash and AfterEffects the digital puppet creating tools echo the process and creation of stop-motion, paper cut-out animation.

5.3 The frame-by-frame and 2D puppet animation created in the Flash platform for ‘Big Man’

In the creation of *Big Man*, the Flash platform was used in large sections of the following scenes: the title sequence after *Prologue*, *The dream of the statue*, *The dream of the tree* and *Banishment*. This section explores the frame-by-frame and 2D puppet animation I created in Flash for these scenes. I explored 2D digital puppet animation because stylistically and (to an extent) technically it correlates with the traditional paper cut-out

animation I used in the *Prologue*. While the principles regarding the creation and movement of the puppets are the same as those used in the traditional method, one is able to use the Flash tweening functions to animate, which significantly reduces labour. The difference, however, is that stylistically one is mostly limited to the vector-based nature of the Flash tools. I used frame-by-frame animation in those sequences that contained complex cycles of movement that were not suited to digital puppet animation in Flash, which, like silhouette animation, is more of a profile art. I also used frame-by-frame animation to ‘clean up’ and refine the movement of some of the digital puppets, or in sequences where the movement of the digital puppets became too complex for the puppet articulations. Aside from the fact that the frames were drawn and processed within the Flash animation platform, which is quicker and easier than paper-based and traditional cel animation, the frame-by-frame process was hand-drawn in the traditional way.

5.3.1 The frame-by-frame process in Flash

The first instance where frame-by-frame animation is used in *Big Man* is in the opening shot, after the title screen (following the *Prologue*). This animated sequence shows the opening screen of the film (after the *Prologue* scene) with the figure of BJ Vorster walking across a blank but textured screen (see Fig. 5.4), which fades out to reveal him paused in front of the open door at the entrance to the house at Groote Schuur (a digitally recreated and manipulated archival still) (see Fig. 5.5). The house recurs in the central narrative and is synonymous with Nebuchadnezzar’s palace in the biblical narrative. The shot also establishes Vorster’s presence in the house at the start of the film. It also introduces Vorster in the role of Nebuchadnezzar (and Dr Beyers Naudé as Daniel). It is the place wherein Vorster (in the role of Nebuchadnezzar) experiences his dreams, and is also the place from which he is later banished into the wilderness.

I used hand-drawn, frame-by-frame animation here because the complexity of movement was not conducive to tweened motion or to digital or traditional paper cut-out animation (which is suited mainly to simple movement in profile). Although the sequence was created in Flash, it is visualised and conceptualised differently from any of the subsequent Flash clips. It is animated using a simple line drawing with solid dark forms. The frame-by-frame method I used to create this sequence is the same as the traditional method,

although the digital platform has significant labour-saving benefits. In the traditional frame-by-frame animation approach, the animator usually draws, frame-by-frame, onto paper or a transparent cel using an animation table (and an onion-skin method, to create and refine movement). The individual frames then have to be captured photographically or scanned and taken into an editing suite before they can be properly viewed in a linear, time-based way.



Figure 5.4 Stewart, M. 2014. Opening screen showing frame-by-frame Flash animation of BJ Vorster [hand-drawn animation]



Figure 5.5 Stewart, M. 2014. Screen introducing BJ Vorster as Nebuchadnezzar (and Dr Beyers Naudé as Daniel) at the entrance to Grootte Schuur [hand-drawn animation]

With animating platforms such as Flash, one is animating directly within the animation timeline (see Fig. 5.6). Similar to the cel animation method, one only needs to adjust the part of each drawing that moves. Also, the fact that one is working directly within the timeline, in a linear fashion, allows one to view and review the motion as it is created. The ‘onion skin’ function allows one to review the cycle of motion as one would with the cel animation process. As is possible with traditional cel animation, I animated this sequence in layers — a layer for the face, a layer for the black suit and tie, and a layer for the white collar. Each layer has transparency, and so the layers function as digital versions of the celluloid sheets used in traditional cel animation (see Fig. 5.6)

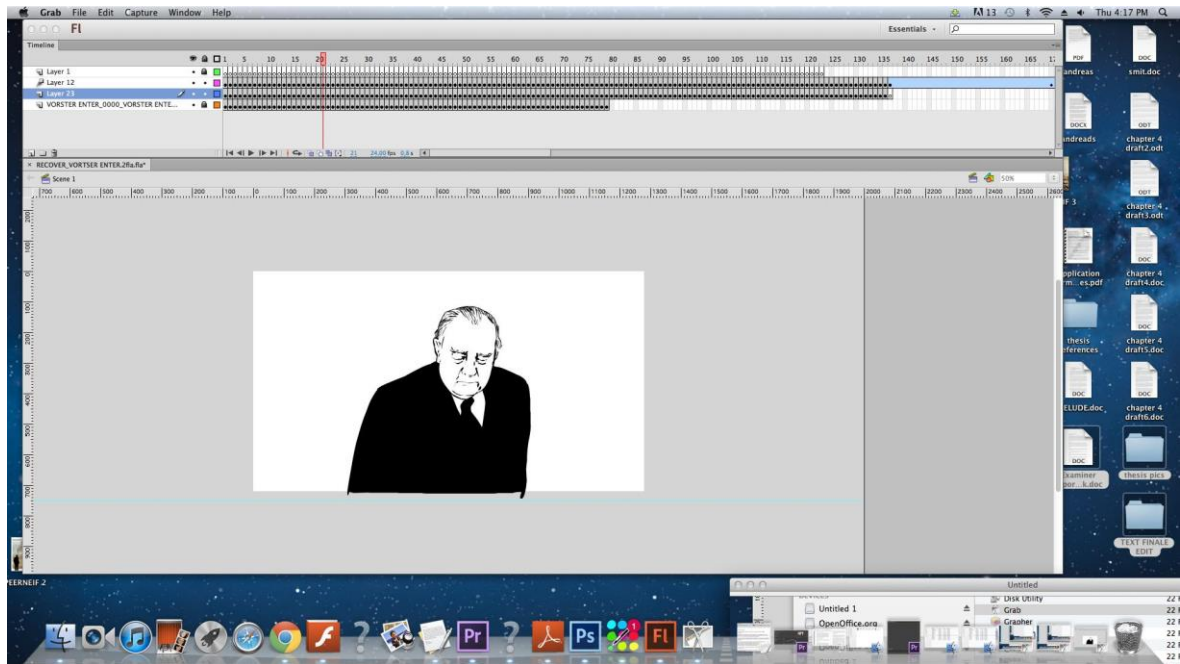


Figure 5.6 Stewart, M. 2012. Screen capture showing the timeline and the layers of the Flash interface [digital still]

This sequence was exported from Flash in a format (.swf) which retained the transparency of the footage. This enabled me to insert the animated sequence over the background screens at the editing phase (as seen in Fig. 5.4 and Fig. 5.5). I kept the drawing of the animation very simple and stark. This was necessary, as I wanted the figure to stick out from the background screens. At the same time, I did not want the animation to be too disparate from the background, so kept the transparency within the face by keeping it a simple line drawing. Conceptually, the transparency of the image gives it a ghost-like resonance, evoking memory rather than an immediate reality. This also corresponds with the background image of Groote Schuur, which I faded and blurred, and to which I added a sepia tint to give the effect of an old photograph.

A challenge in creating this sequence was retaining BJ Vorster's likeness all the way through, as well as achieving believable movement. In the final two seconds of this insert, Vorster's torso as he walks up the stairs to the entrance of Groote Schuur is based on archival footage of him. However, as the source footage was of a very elderly Vorster toward the end of his life, I had to adapt the animation of the face by referring to various sources of a younger Vorster. The various angles of his face were sourced from a collection of short clips and photographs (see Fig. 5.7).



Figure 5.7 Stills from various archival sources showing different angles of BJ Vorster's head [digital images]

The background for this insert is a heavily manipulated digital image created from various stills from BBC archival footage (see Fig 5.8). As noted, I wanted to retain the look of an old photograph or movie still, in keeping with the visual approach to the digital manipulated backgrounds used throughout the film. Fig. 5.9 shows some of the stills from the archival footage I used to compose the image. To create the background, I inserted selected stills into the composition and then drew on top, resized and retouched them with various digital drawing and image manipulation tools in Photoshop. I then imported the image into a digital film editing suite (Adobe Premiere) to integrate it into the Flash animated sequence.



Figure 5.8 Stewart, M. 2012. Manipulated digital drawing of the entrance showing the house at Groote Schuur [manipulated digital drawing]



Figure 5.9 Archival stills used to compose the digital image in Figure 5.8 (2013) [digital images]

I created a large-scale, long image to accommodate zooming and panning across the image (see Fig. 5.8). The movement of BJ Vorster was animated on the spot, while the background moved and panned across the screen. In the final edit I altered the colour and lessened the tonal contrast and opacity of the original image to visually and stylistically integrate it with the Flash animated sequence. As with Fig. 4.31 showing the digital drawing of the crowd scene that functioned as a backdrop for sections of Dr HF Verwoerd's funeral in *Prologue*, the background image is a still, showing a frozen moment in time, while the frontal animation is showing movement as though in real time. Also, as with Fig. 4.31, the still background with its sepia tint and slight blur is intended to suggest an old photograph and a frozen moment from the past. I wanted these backgrounds to suggest memory or a moment in history, snapshots of a time now gone. This corresponds with the fact that the scenes wherein such imagery occurs reference archival material of historical events.

The next frame-by-frame Flash animated segments are in the *Banishment* scene. These sections show BJ Vorster (having just risen from bed) at the front door of Groote Schuur, donning his coat (which is shown hanging next to his hat and umbrella next to the door), standing outside the house in a wind, and finally reaching the top of a hill just above the house. Thereafter, until the paint-on-glass scenes, the remaining scenes of Vorster in the

‘wilderness’ were created in Flash using digital puppets. The reason these sections use frame-by-frame animation was because the movements in these instances were too complex to use animated digital puppets.

Fig 5.10 shows a still from the frame-by-frame sequence of Vorster putting on his coat. I animated Vorster in his pyjamas and the black coat separately, each on their own layer. I first animated the movement of the figure, and then the jacket in its own sequence and layer. In this way I could create the movement of the jacket by using the movement of the arms as a guide. This process of animating in layers is demonstrated by Fig. 5.10 and Fig. 5.11. The background drawing of the interior of Groote Schuur was created in both Photoshop and Flash. In this instance, I integrated the background with the animated elements in Flash rather than in an editing suite, postproduction.

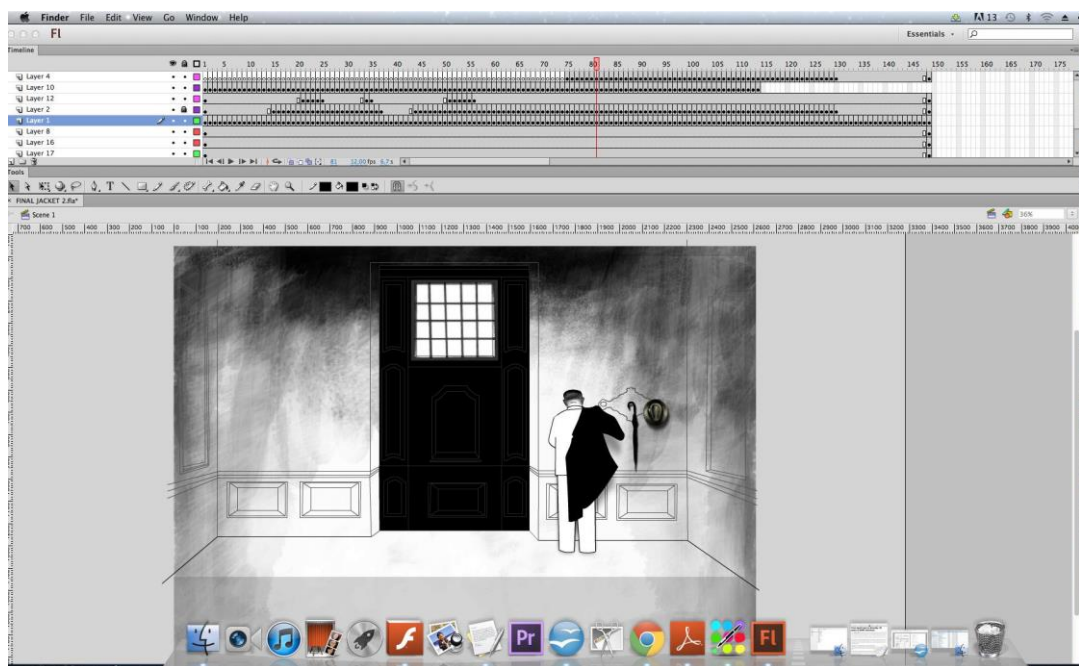


Figure 5.10 Stewart, M. 2012. Screen capture showing the process of animating on layers [digital image]

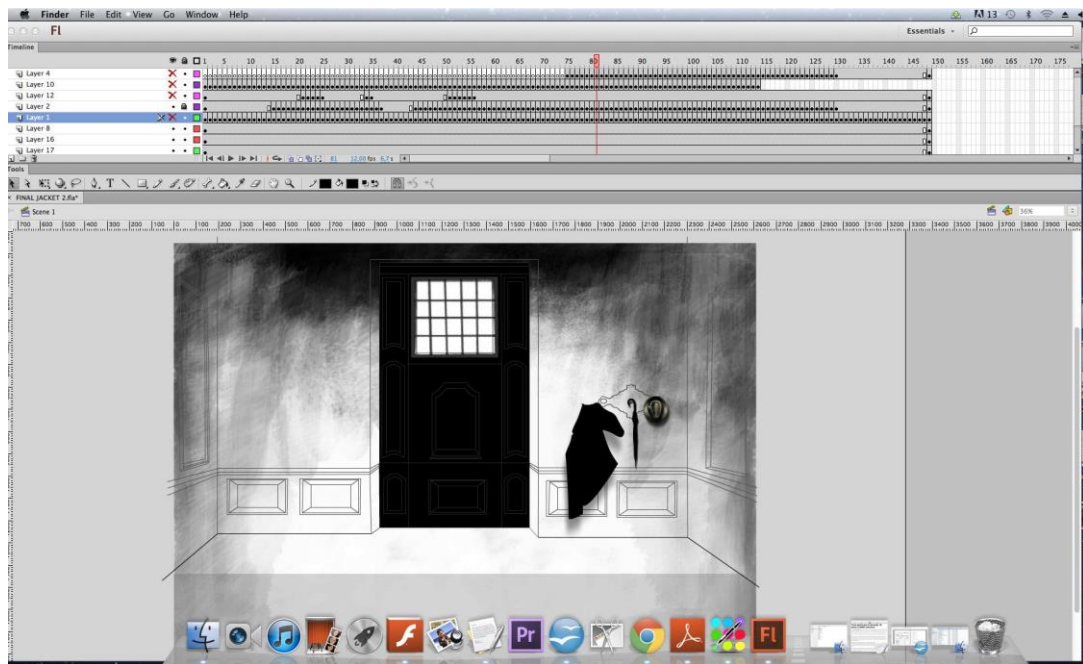


Figure 5.11 Stewart, M. 2012. Screen capture showing the animation layer of the coat [hand-drawn animation]

The next instance of frame-by-frame animation in Flash can be seen in the scene that follows BJ Vorster leaving the house at Groote Schuur (see Fig. 5.12). In this segment Vorster is shown in silhouette reaching the top of a hill just above Groote Schuur. The figure is shown moving, at a slightly oblique angle to, but towards, the viewer. This manner of frontal movement is impossible to achieve with puppet animation (either digital or traditional). Thus I opted for frame-by-frame animation here. Lotte Reiniger talks of the difficulties in creating this kind of forward movement in her paper cut-out process. In this event, she also used a frame-by-frame approach. She demonstrated this by showing how she portrayed a bird flying from a distance toward the viewer, using multiple cut-outs which began small and became gradually larger (Isaacs 1971). The principle for portraying forward movement, frame-by-frame, remains the same as for the hand-drawn process.



Figure 5.12 Stewart, M. 2012. Stills from frame-by-frame sequence from *Banishment* [hand-drawn animation]

I also used frame-by-frame animation to correct distortions created when tweening the movement of the digital puppets. These distortions usually occur when the movement of the digital puppet becomes too complex. In Fig. 5.13, for example, I had to move from digital puppet animation to hand-drawn, frame-by-frame animation. In this section the silhouetted figure of BJ Vorster mutates into the form of a baboon. An intricate metamorphosis such as this is not possible to achieve with digital puppet animation in

Flash, and thus had to be hand-drawn, frame-by-frame. In Fig. 5.13, images 1, 2 and 3 denote the sequential movement of the digital puppet moving from an upright position onto all fours. Images 3, 4 and 5 denote the form mutating from man to baboon — this could only be achieved with hand-drawn, frame-by-frame animation. By the time the baboon had emerged in full I could recreate the puppet in its baboon form and resume animating the baboon as a digital puppet.

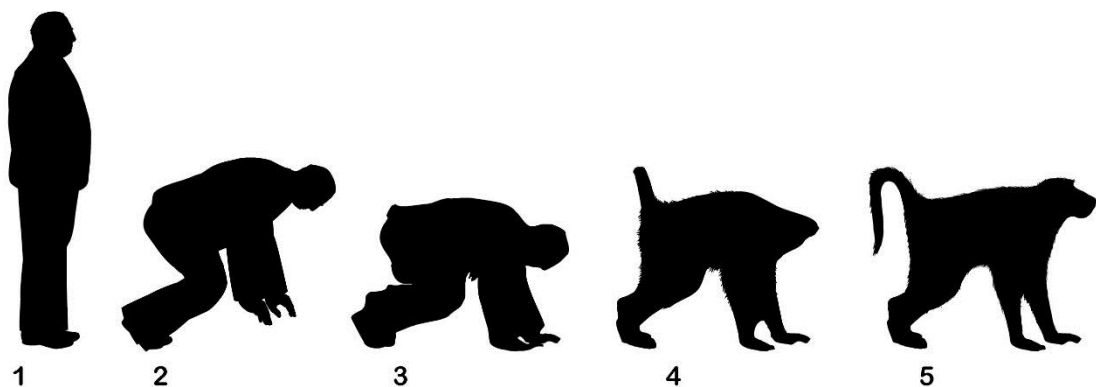


Figure 5.13 Stewart, M. 2012. Stills showing a metamorphosis from human to baboon and simultaneously the move from digital puppet animation to frame-by-frame animation [hand-drawn animation]

Another instance where frame-by-frame animation was used in conjunction with tweening can be seen in the animation of the tree in the *Dream of the tree* scene. The movement of the branches was created with tweens, while the moment of the leaves blowing in the breeze and getting blown off the tree had to be hand-drawn. Tweens, if overused, can look contrived and, as pointed out by the animator John K, “cheesy” (Simpson 2007). Tweened movement is often identified by its machine-smooth visual effects. The most effective way to use tweens, I found, is when they are used purely as a labour-saving device and are invisible to the eye. I used tweens in this way to create the effect of branches moving in a breeze. With this method I divided the branches into segments. I then tweened each segment to move gently backwards and forwards. I could not get away with this method for the leaves, however, and had to rely on frame-by-frame animation to create the effect of leaves blowing in the wind. Fig. 5.15 (a screen capture) denotes in different colours the sections of the branches that were tweened. The layers in the timeline that are blocked in

blue show the tweened movement. As is indicated in the blue layers, only key frames (the black dots) are needed to be plotted and the program calculates the 'in-between' movement. Fig. 5.16 shows the frame-by-frame animated leaves (in pink) as well as the frame-by-frame approach in the timeline.



Figure 5.14 Stewart, M. 2012. Still from 'Big Man' showing leaves that were created using frame-by-frame animation in Flash [hand-drawn animation]

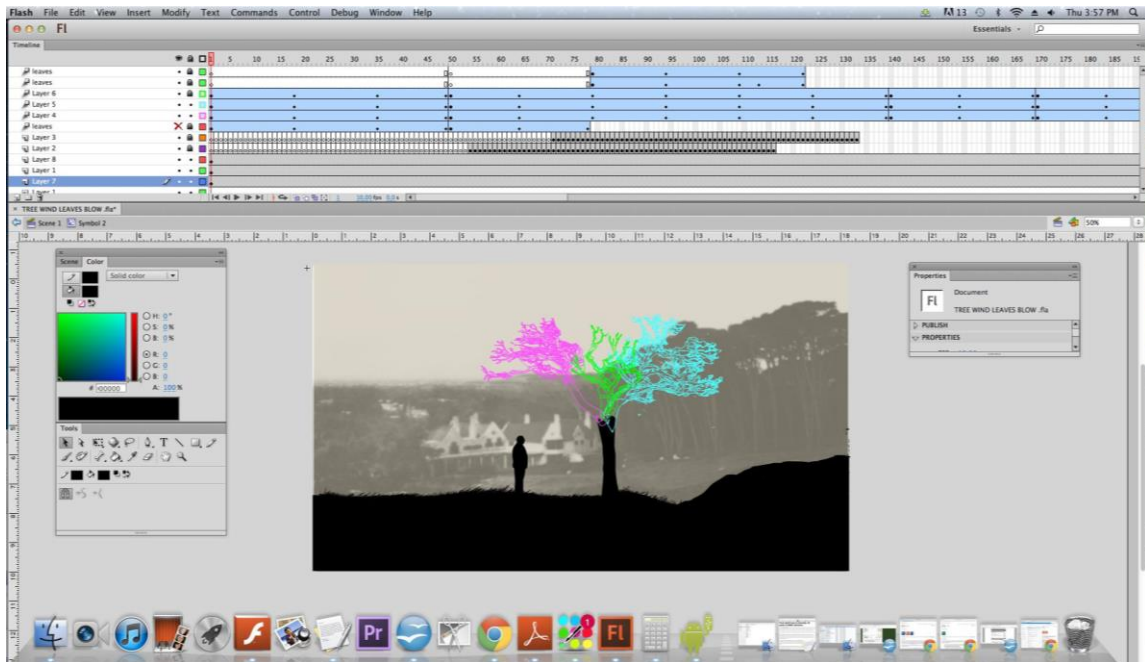


Figure 5.15 Stewart, M. 2012. Screen capture illustrating the twined sections in Flash [digital image]

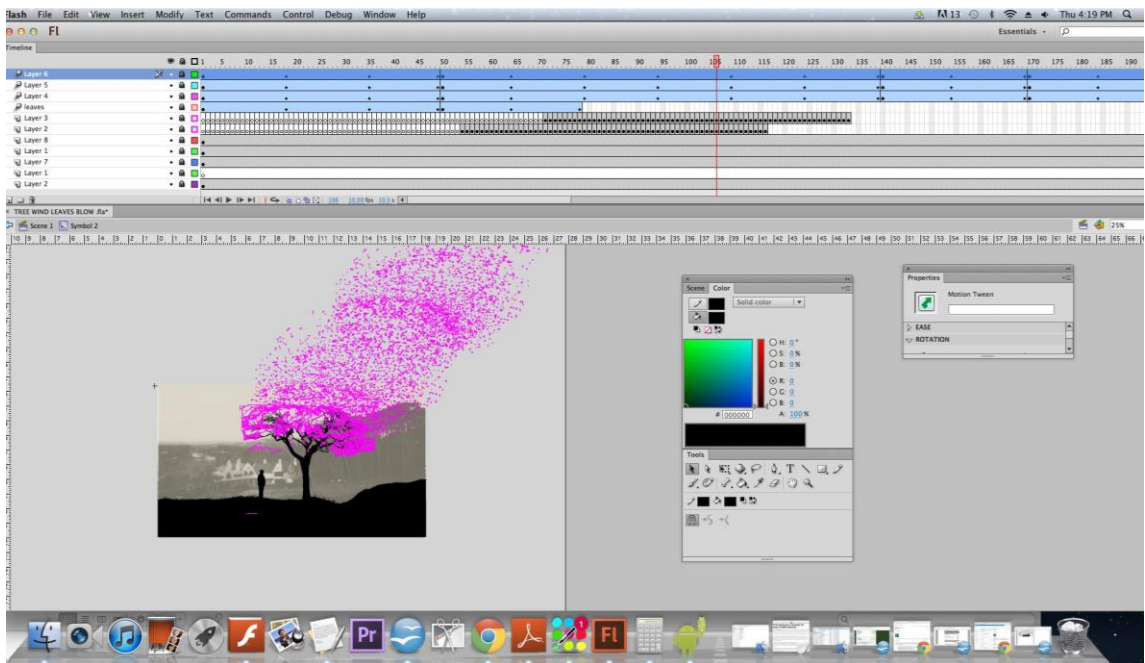


Figure 5.16 Stewart, M. 2012. Screen capture showing (via the onion skin layers) the frame-by-frame drawings of the leaves in the animation window and how they appear on the timeline [digital image]

5.3.2 Frame-by frame animation using pixel-based graphics

Flash was not the only digital platform used to create frame-by-frame movement. I used pixel-based graphics to create short, detailed animated sequences showing intimate close-up shots, as seen in those of BJ Vorster and Beyers Naudé. I used tried and tested film and animation framing devices, such as head-and-shoulder shots, extreme close-ups, and over-the-shoulder shots (Simon 2003: 66) to draw the viewer into the intimacy of the scene and to draw attention to the psychology of the central character. These close-ups of Beyers Naudé and of BJ Vorster (sleeping, lying in bed, seated, and playing chess) in *The dream of the statue*, *The dream of the tree* and *Banishment* scenes, were hand-drawn, frame-by-frame and then put together in an editing suite. As the vector-based nature of the Flash tools does not allow for the creation of painterly detail or soft, continuous tones, I used the pixel-based drawing applications Photoshop and Corel Paint to create these sections. Like Flash, these applications are authoring software and provide the user with the creative tools and other embedded knowledge systems with which to produce creative projects. Unlike Web 2.0 applications, these drawing programs assume creative knowledge such as drawing and painting skills. In other words, while there are certain functions that greatly facilitate the creative process, these applications will not draw for you or provide you with all or most of your creative material.

Fig. 5.17, Fig. 5.18, Fig. 5.19 and Fig. 5.20 show stills from different close-up animated sequences of BJ Vorster's face. In Fig. 5.17 Vorster wakes in *The dream of the statue* scene, while Fig. 5.18 and Fig. 5.19 are intimate close-ups of him playing chess at the end of *The dream of the tree* scene. All these sequences — bar Fig. 5.20 which is a still shot in the film — have limited facial and eye movement. I wanted detailed, naturalistic movement that corresponded to the realism of the face, hence I animated the facial movement using the draw and paint tools of the drawing applications. While these animated movements were created on the digital drawing platform, the hand-drawn process is very similar to the fine art animation approaches of Kentridge, Leaf and Poole, the difference being that one does not destroy each preceding frame as (due to its digital nature) each frame can be endlessly stored and replicated. Fig. 5.21 and Fig. 5.22 are close-up animated shots of Vorster's hands making a chess move. These were complex cycles of movement and, as with the face movement, I used myself as a model and animated with the aid of a mirror. Animating using soft tones and painterly marks is a meticulously

detailed approach, as one is animating shifts in gesture, light and dark within the form. This was an entirely different process to the vector-based, frame-by-frame scenes created in Flash (see Fig. 5.4; Fig. 5.10 and Fig. 5.12), and where movement is created with line and solid shape, and one concentrates mainly on the outer edges of the form. Due to the complexity of creating movement in this way, it is really only conducive for detailed close-ups with subtle movement, or short cycles of more complex movement (as with Fig. 5.21).

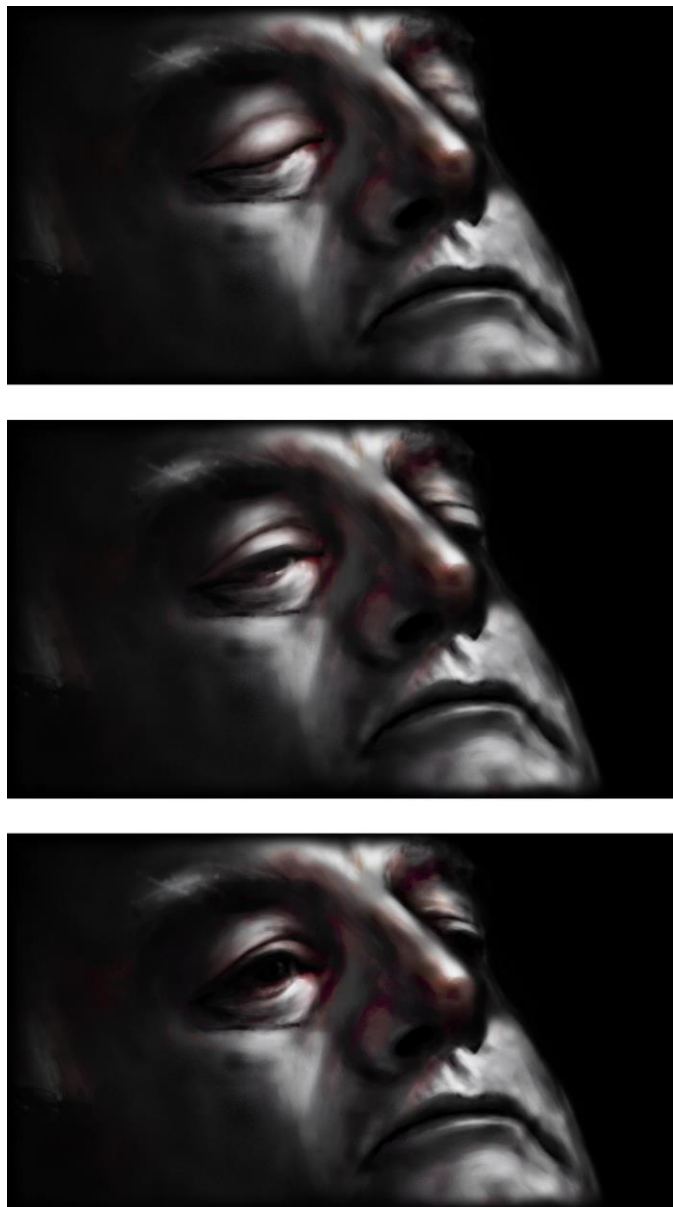


Figure 5.17 Stewart, M. 2012. BJ Vorster awakes in ‘The dream of the statue’ (Big Man) [hand-drawn, digital animation]



Figure 5.18 Stewart, M. 2012. Chess scene in ‘Banishment’ (Big Man) [hand-drawn, digital animation]



Figure 5.19 Stewart, M. 2012. Chess scene in ‘Banishment’ (Big Man) [hand-drawn, digital animation]



Figure 5.20 Stewart, M. 2012. Over-the-shoulder shot in ‘The dream of the tree’ (Big Man) [digital drawing]

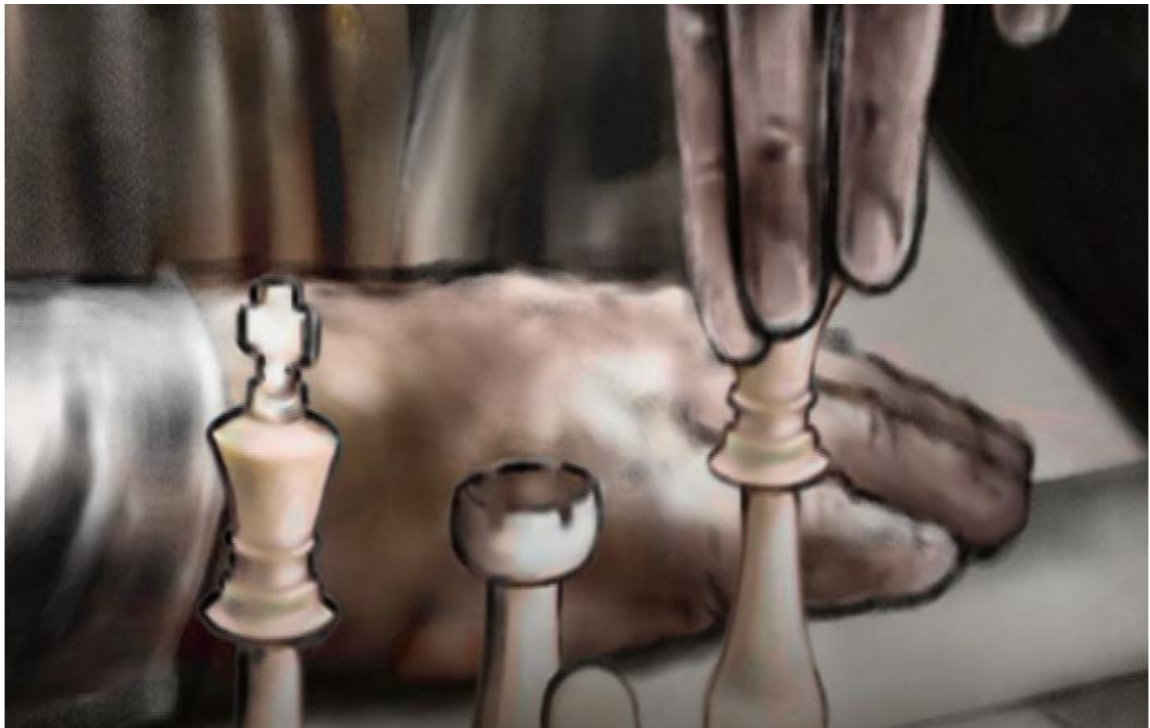


Figure 5.21 Stewart, M. 2012. Chess scene in ‘Banishment’ (Big Man) [hand-drawn, digital animation]



Figure 5.22 Stewart, M. 2012. Chess scene in ‘Banishment’ (Big Man) [hand-drawn, digital animation]

I used the same graphic approach in the shots of Dr Beyers Naudé in the *Dream of the statue* and the *Dream of the tree* scenes. The first shot, in the *Dream of the statue*, shows a still drawing that corresponds to the spoken narrative of the Vorster/Nebuchadnezzar character: “and then Daniel came in whose name was Belteshazzar...” (Fig. 5.23). The second shot occurs in the *Dream of the tree*, when the Vorster/Nebuchadnezzar character says: “At last Daniel, whose name was Beltheshazzar, came before me” (Fig. 5.24). He was astonished for one hour and his thoughts troubled him...” This sequence is subtly animated, with a close-up showing him deep in thought with some eye movement. As mentioned, Dr Beyers Naudé represents the character of Daniel in the film. His historical context, his religious convictions and his public condemnation of apartheid (even though he faced rejection from the broader conservative Afrikaans community) make him an ideal figure for the character of Daniel.



Figure 5.23 Stewart, M. 2015. Dr Beyers Naudé as Daniel: ‘The dream of the statue’ (Big Man) [digital drawing]



Figure 5.24 Stewart, M. 2015. Dr Beyers Naudé as Daniel: ‘The dream of the tree’ (Big Man) [hand-drawn, digital animation]

5.4 Digital puppet animation in ‘Big Man’

The *Dream of the statue*, the *Dream of the tree* and the *Banishment* scenes also incorporated digital puppets which were created and animated with Flash in a very similar way to the articulated paper cut-out puppets I created for *Prologue*. In method and principle (even though the application does aid in creating movement) this process is similar to the traditional paper cut-out puppet animation I created for *Prologue*. One even moves the puppets in a similar, hand-manipulated way (albeit with a hand-held digital pen or mouse).

The Flash animated scenes that used digital puppets were created using a tool called the ‘bone’ tool. This is a relatively new tool to Flash, and it uses inverse kinetics (a method in Flash used to create movement with ‘an object or set of objects in relation to each other using an articulated structure of bones’) to create a digital puppet (Grover 2012: 58). The ‘bone’ tool allows one to create an articulated, movable skeleton structure in two different ways: as ‘shape objects’ or ‘symbol instances’. ‘Shape objects’ are a commonly used graphic form in Flash. They have graphic characteristics, in that they are made up of strokes and/or fills and they can be transformed in various ways, but are individual, ‘coherent objects’:

Flash graphics are made up of two primary elements: strokes and fills. Strokes may vary in thickness, but they look like lines. A stroke may be a single straight line, a curved line, or a complex series of connected lines. Strokes can also be dotted or dashed lines. Fills are coloured shapes or surface areas. A fill may take on a common shape, such as a rectangle or an oval, or a fill may be a complex shape, such as a cartoon character’s head. When you’re drawing, you can create strokes and fills independently or together. (Grover 2012: 58)

Grover defines symbols thus:

Symbols give you a way to reuse your work and keep your animation’s finished file size down to a bare minimum. When you create a symbol, Flash stores the information for the symbol, or master copy, in your document as usual. But every time you create a copy (an instance) of that symbol, all Flash adds to your file is the

information it needs to keep track of where you positioned that particular instance and any modifications you make to it on the stage. (Grover 2012: 248)

With symbol instances one can link symbols together like links in a chain or railway coaches (Fig. 5.25) to create a set of moveable, joined objects. The other way to create a skeleton structure is by adding bones within a shape, making that shape flexible and bendable (Grover 2012: 326–342). Chris Grover in his very helpful *Flash CS6: The missing manual* (2012) uses the example of creating movement for a snake. By placing a skeleton structure within the shape of a snake, for example, one can bend the shape into naturalistic slithering and curving motions, rather than meticulously having to redraw each frame (see Fig. 5.26). The ‘bone’ tool function is a major time-saving device, as with an articulated armature or skeleton one only needs to plot in the movement in terms of poses (key frames or extremes) and the program fills in the in-betweens. The time one can save in this way is significant. For example, to create a walk cycle of thirty seconds using stop-motion paper cut-out animation or traditional cel/frame-by-frame animation can take days or even weeks. With the ‘bone’ tool it is possible to produce an animated walk within thirty minutes.

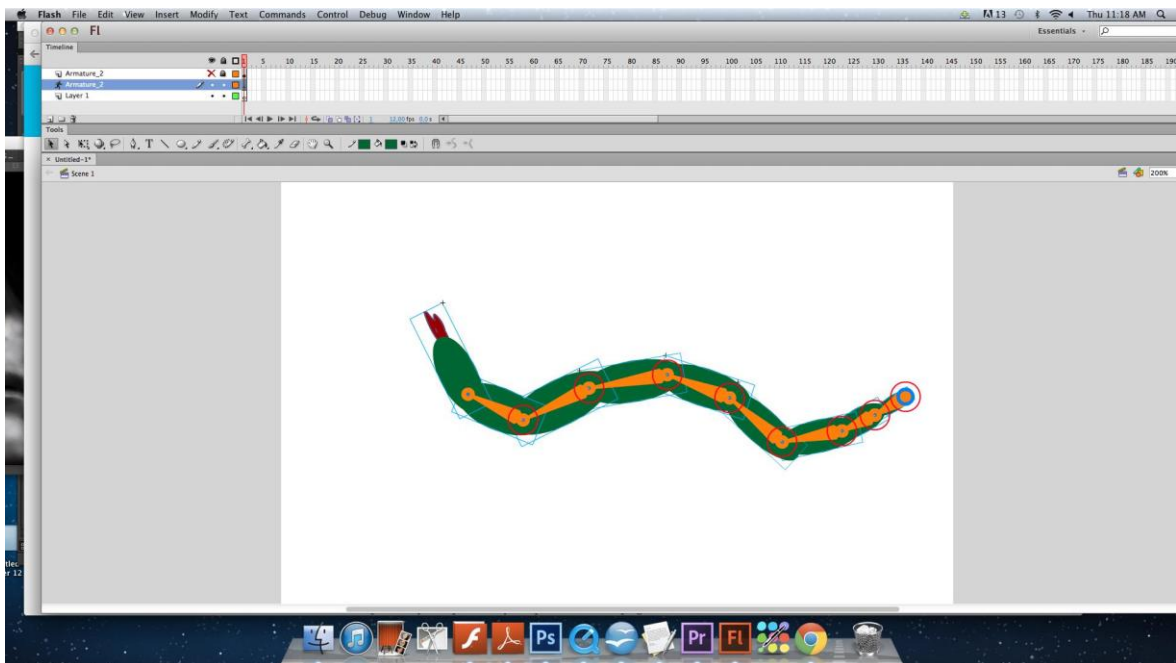


Figure 5.25 Stewart, M. 2014. Screen capture demonstrating ‘symbol objects’ linked with the ‘bone’ tool [digital image]

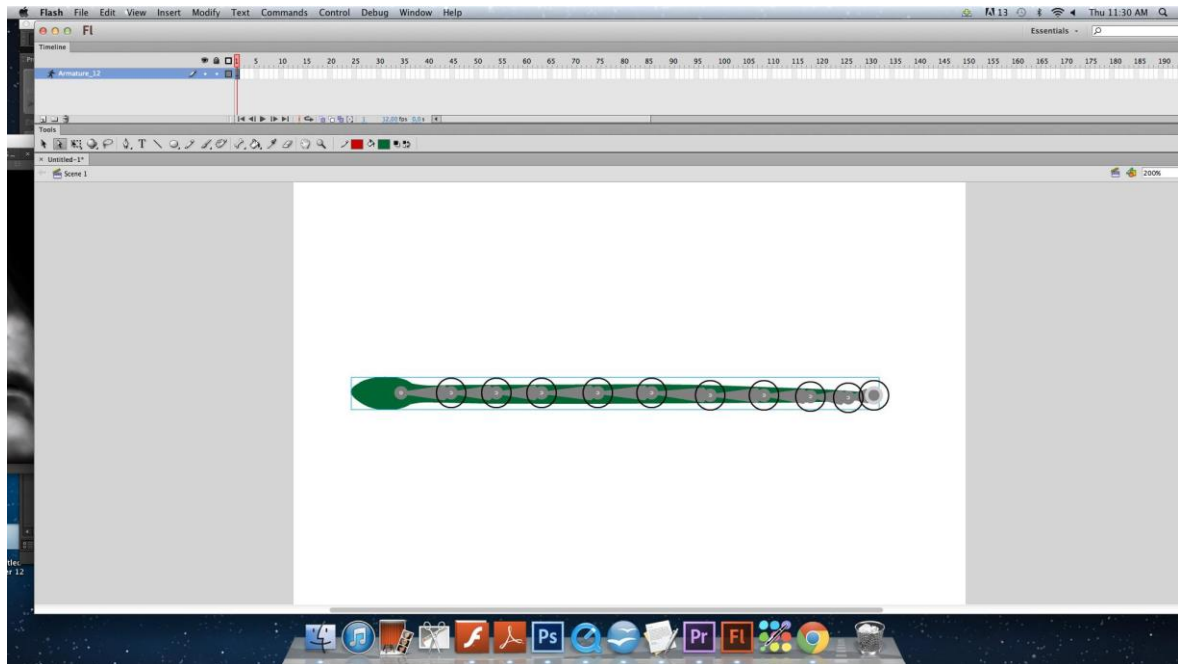


Figure 5.26 Stewart, M. 2014. Screen capture showing bone tool articulations on a single object drawing [digital image]

When creating a skeleton structure using ‘shape objects’, the forms cannot become too complex or tonally varied as the tween motion created by the program causes the ‘shape objects’ to become too distorted. If the shape is too complex, Flash simply will not plot the movement. In this instance the following message comes up: “The shape is too complex. Optimize or convert to a movie clip”. This is illustrated in Fig. 5.27. One can then either optimize or simplify the shape, or convert it to a ‘movie clip’ or a ‘graphic symbol’. As symbols, objects can be moved and rotated with the bone tool in the same way as paper cut-out puppets. However, the movement is limited to that determined by the articulated joints rather than the naturalistic, flexible movement allowed when using shape objects.

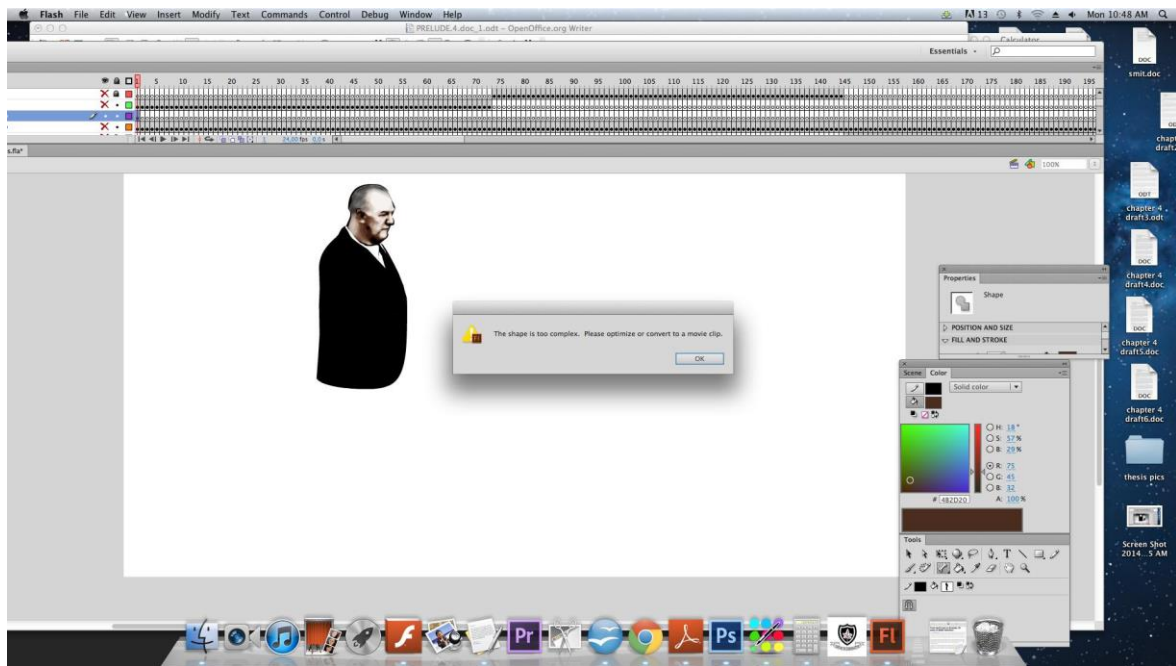


Figure 5.27 Stewart, M. 2014. Screen capture illustrating complex shapes [digital image]

While using ‘bones’ certainly makes animating much quicker, this is not a seamless process. One still needs to know the traditional techniques perfected by the ‘old men’ of the early Disney studios (Johnston & Thomas 1981: 47). It is vital, for example, to precisely draw in the ‘extremes’ or key frames (used in the traditional cel animation process to denote the key frames that dictate the nature and direction of the movement) as they will inform how the ‘in-betweens’ (the frames that denote movement between each ‘extreme’) are plotted in by the program. However, more often than not, one needs to go back and adjust the in-betweens and the extremes to express the desired movement. Also, it is sometimes impossible, particularly when animating a complex sequence of movement (even after manually adjusting the in-betweens) to plot the exact movement one wants without distorting the forms. In this case, it becomes necessary to make adjustments using frame-by-frame animation. Another limitation of animating with the bone tool and 2D digital puppets is that if one wishes to create realistic movement with human or animal forms across space, such as walking, one is restricted to working with movement in profile, or slightly angled movement, much like that of paper cut-out and silhouette animation.

I used the bone tool mostly using only ‘shape objects’, which gives a more fluid movement (see Fig. 5.26). In one instance I combined this approach with tweened symbols. This was

for the digital puppet of BJ Vorster, in the *Dream of the statue* scene. In this dream scene the suited figure of Vorster is shown walking in a conceptual space against a background composed of an archival map image of the ground plan of John Vorster Square. The figure is animated walking on the spot, so the background pans from right to left, thus giving the illusion that the figure is walking through space (see Fig. 5.28).

To retain both the flexible movement of the walk, and the tonal and linear detail of the head, I used a combination of graphic shapes and symbols. I used the bone tool with graphic shapes on the torso and limbs of the figure of BJ Vorster, but left the head as a symbol. Thus I could bend and move the limbs in a naturalistic way to create the walk cycle, using the bone tool function. I then tweened the head to follow the movement of the body. Grover defines a tween as “an animation term that comes from all those in-between frames that animators have to draw to create a smooth animated motion” (Grover 2012: 40). As seen in Fig. 5.29, I chose to animate each set of limbs separately rather than creating one articulated skeleton in a single graphic object. I found this limited unwanted distortion and gave each limb a greater flexibility.

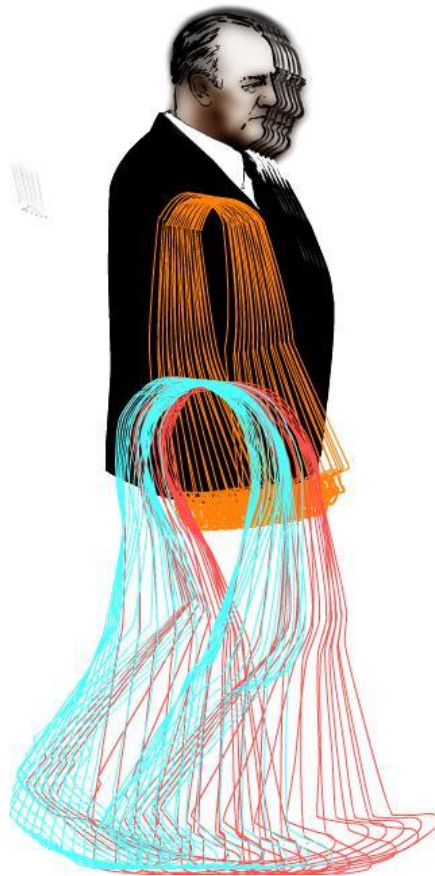


Figure 5.28 Stewart, M. 2012. Screen capture showing ‘on the spot’ walk cycle [digital image]

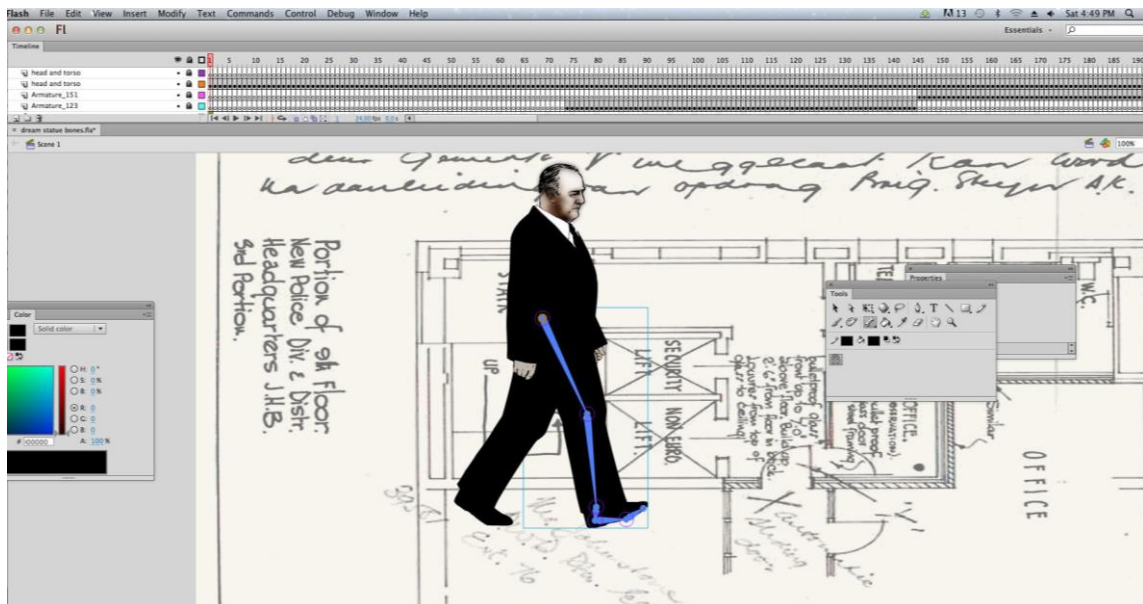


Figure 5.29 Stewart, M. 2014. Screen capture showing the articulated right leg of the digital puppet of BJ Vorster [digital image]

The scene of BJ Vorster rising from his bed was animated in the same way as the walk cycle of Vorster in the *Dream of the statue* (see Fig. 5.30), using a ‘motion tween’ for the animation of the head and inserting bones within each set of limbs. The challenge in this scene was to minimize the distortion of the stroke or outline of the forms when moving the puppet (see Fig. 5.30). To keep the outlines of the forms from breaking up during the animation process, I had to make sure before I began animating that each articulation could handle extremes of movement without distorting.

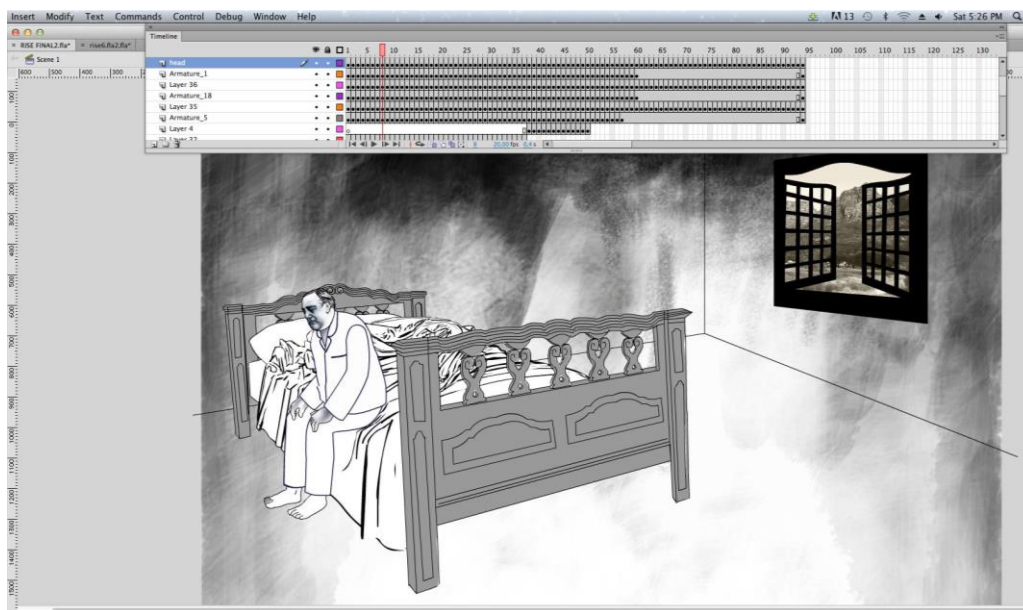


Figure 5.30 Stewart, M. 2014. Screen capture showing digital puppet of BJ Vorster: The limbs were created with ‘shape objects’ with the hands, feet and head were tweened ‘symbols’ [digital image]

While I wanted to visually and conceptually distinguish the first scene of the film from the scenes that followed (by first using traditional paper cut-out animation and then digital animation), I wanted echoes of the visual aesthetic of the paper cut-out scene to be evident in the digitally created scenes. This can be seen in the comparison of the paper cut-out and digital puppets of BJ Vorster in Fig. 5.31. Both figures are articulated in the same places, both are in profile, and both have limbs and torsos silhouetted in black while the hands and heads are detailed. However, the handmade, painterly quality of the paper puppet does stand out from the smoother, vector-based digital puppet.

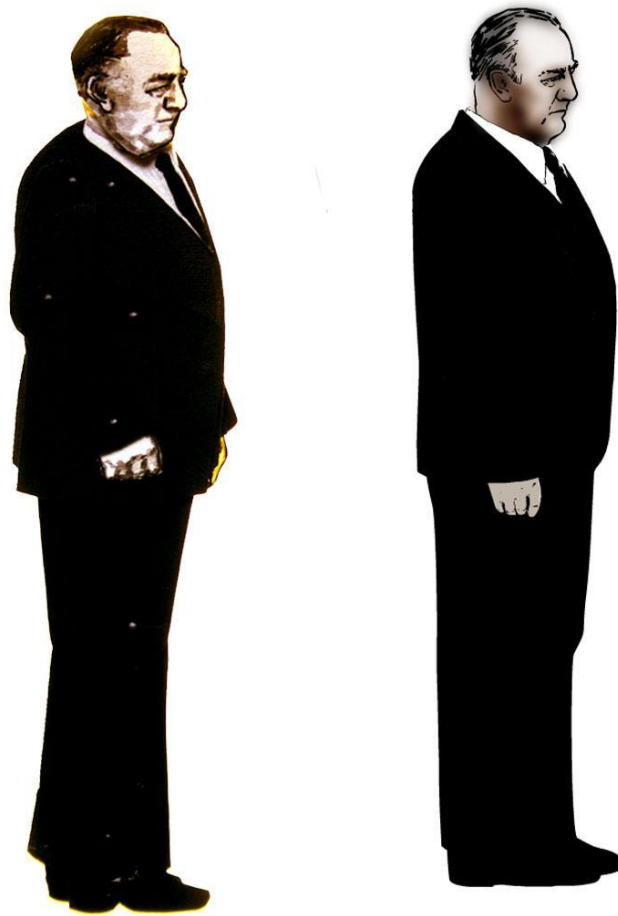


Figure 5.31 Stewart, M. 2012–2013. Stills showing the visual similarities between the Flash-generated and paper cut-out images of BJ Vorster [paper cut-out, pen and ink and digital drawing]

Another obvious visual link between the traditional paper cut-out approach and the digital approach I used is in the paper cut-out puppet of the dog (see Fig. 4.20) and the digital puppet of the baboon that appears in the *Dream of the tree* scene. In addition to their similarities in form and articulation, both puppets are in silhouette and in profile. Also, both have similar articulations and gaits. In fact, as their articulations and gaits were so similar, I found I could easily adapt the walk cycle I had created for the dog to that of the baboon (Fig. 5.32) using the ‘bone’ tool and the tweening functions in Flash. The extremes or key frames (which I had already worked out for the dog’s walk, as demonstrated in Fig.

4.22) were digitally created and inserted into the timeline, and adapted to the baboon's gait. The in-betweens were then plotted by the program.

Fig. 5.32 shows the animation timeline for part of the walk sequence of the baboon. The solid green areas within the timeline indicate the tweened sections of movement, while the dots show the key frames.

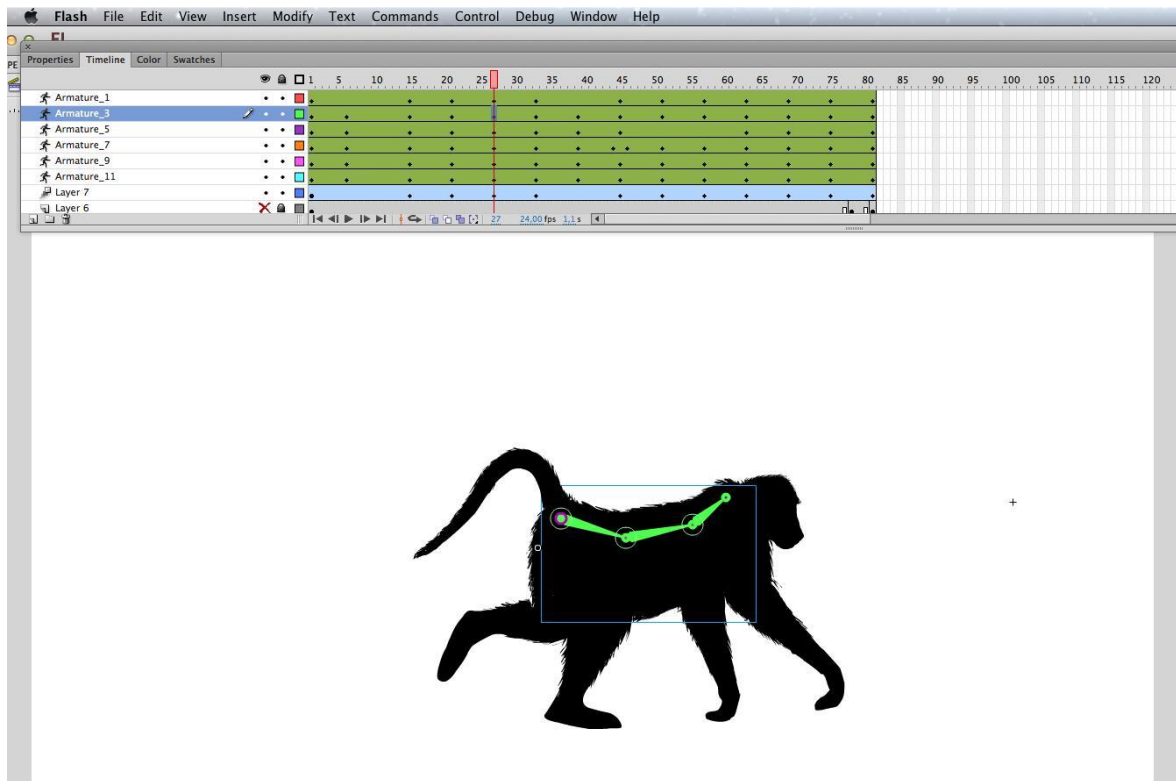


Figure 5.32 Stewart, M. 2014. Screen capture showing digital puppet, Chacma baboon [digital image]

While the silhouetted form is by nature a flat shape, one can give the impression of complexity in the overall shape and in the outer edges of the form. In this way I was able to portray a naturalistic baboon silhouette. The bone tool is not meant to be used on forms with sketchy, broken lines— such as those used to create the furriness of the baboon — as the in-betweens become extremely distorted and impossible to correct or adjust. Nonetheless, I found that if one uses a broken line on the outer edges of a solid shape, the distortion of the in-betweens is much reduced. I discovered that I could further reduce the

distortion by testing and meticulously adjusting the distortions on the extremities of movement for each limb during the creation of the digital puppet. Because of this, the puppet took some time to create. But once the puppet was complete with all its articulations, the walk cycle took only a few days to animate. Despite my troubleshooting, distortions of movement and form still occurred, but I was able to correct this using frame-by-frame animation.



Figure 5.33 Stewart, M. 2013. Stills from the ‘Banishment’ scene (Big Man) showing silhouetted digital puppets of BJ Vorster [digital animation]

I used the same approach I had used to animate and create the digital puppet of the baboon for the silhouetted digital puppets of BJ Vorster in the *Dream of the tree* (see Fig. 5.14) and the *Banishment* scenes (see Fig. 5.33). As with the baboon, parts of the movements and forms were too complex to withstand the tweened movement and distortions occurred. The form and movement of Vorster's clothes blowing in the wind, for example, had to be animated frame-by-frame.

5.5 The visual and conceptual integration of digital photographic imagery and live footage in the Flash-animated scenes

The scenes animated in Flash incorporated digitally manipulated photographs, live footage and hand-drawn digital imagery. The digitally manipulated photographs functioned as still background imagery. These images were manipulated in Photoshop to visually correspond with the digital still imagery used throughout the film, and to allude to old sepia-tinted photographs. The background imagery functions to set the scene of both the fictional and biblical narrative. On the one hand, these images refer to BJ Vorster's environment, when he was Prime Minister of South Africa and living at Groote Schuur, and thus provide a familiar setting for his context. On the other hand, they correspond to the biblical setting, in that the house at Groote Schuur represents Nebuchadnezzar's palace and the landscape of Groote Schuur estate the 'wilderness' to which Nebuchadnezzar was banished.

In the dream scenes and the *Prologue* scene I adopted an approach to background imagery inspired by Reiniger (see Fig. 5.34) and Bartosch (see Fig. 4.14). This involved having the foreground elements and animated forms in dark silhouette (or areas of dark tones) and set against lighter, subtly tonal background imagery. This approach is most obvious in the silhouette animated scenes created in Flash. The backgrounds in these scenes are manipulated photographic images. The digital manipulation of these images involved adjusting the tonal contrast, changing the colour to a sepia tint, adding varying degrees of a blur effect, and (in some images) compositing, airbrushing and merging additional pictorial elements. The subtle, though varied tones in these images and the photographic detail add an illusion of space and depth of field to the composition.



Figure 5.34 Reiniger, L. 1954. *Snow-White and Rose-Red* [digital image] [Online] Available: <http://ts3.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608039121710022903&w=223&h=123&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7> (Accessed 22.08.2013)

Figs 5.35–5.38 show the final digitally manipulated backgrounds, as well as the source imagery used. In Fig. 5.36, Fig. 5.37 and Fig. 5.38 one can see that in comparison to the source imagery the alterations are subtle and minimal, and are limited to tonal and colour changes. Fig. 5.35 contains the most extensive manipulation. As can be seen in the source photographs, the final image has been altered to incorporate landscape elements from two images. This process involved digitally retouching certain areas, removing unwanted elements and adding to the landscape either by redrawing or cloning. I also changed the perspective, making the house appear closer and created a more pronounced foreground.



Final image



Source image



Source image

Figure 5.35 Stewart, M. 2012. Digitally manipulated still with source photographs, Grootte Schuur estate A [digital imagery]



Source image



Final image

Figure 5.36 Stewart, M. 2012. Digitally manipulated still with source photographs, the house Grootte Schuur B [digital imagery]



Source image



Final image

Figure 5.37 Stewart, M. 2012. Digitally manipulated still with source photograph, Groote Schuur estate C [digital imagery]

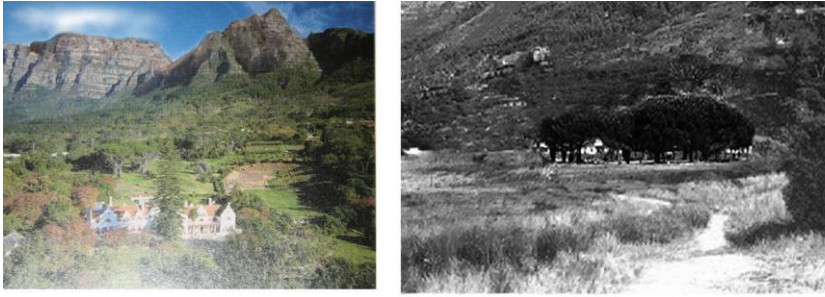


Source image



Final image

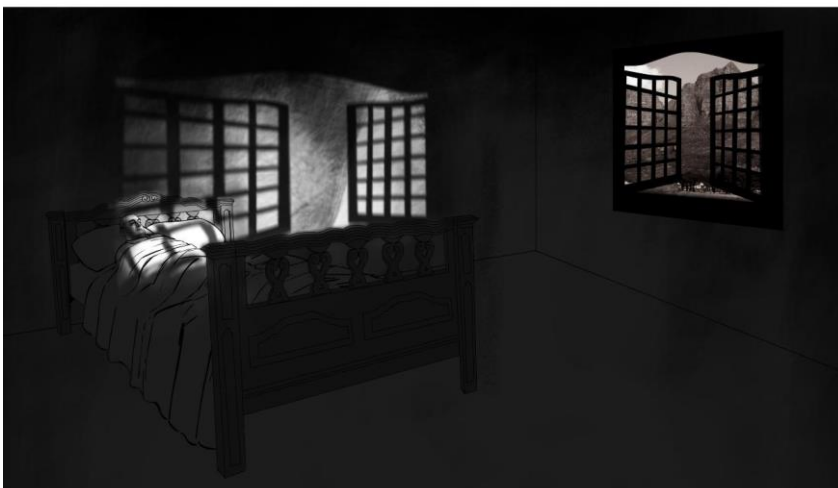
Figure 5.38 Stewart, M. 2012. Digitally manipulated still with source photograph, the abandoned lion's den at Groote Schuur estate [digital imagery]



Source images



Final image



Final image composited

Figure 5.39 Stewart, M. 2012. Digitally manipulated still (before and after compositing) with source photographs [digital imagery]

Fig 5.39 shows how a digitally manipulated photographic image of Devil's Peak was incorporated as a view from the window of BJ Vorster's bedroom at Groote Schuur. The illustration reveals the photographic sources, the final manipulated image, and a still showing the composited image as a view through Vorster's bedroom window at Groote Schuur. I created the image on a large scale and attempted to make it as clear and detailed as possible. As with the landscape in Fig. 5.35, the final image contains merged and manipulated elements of two photographic sources. The first of the source images contains a distant view of the house at Groote Schuur which I digitally removed, as the final image needed to portray a view from a window of the same house.

Fig. 5.40 shows an instance in a Flash-animated scene from *The dream of the statue* where a digitally manipulated photograph was integrated within the animated movement. The source image (see Fig. 5.40(A)) was a media photograph showing the removal of BJ Vorster's bronze bust from the foyer of John Vorster Square. While it may not appear so, the final manipulated image (see Fig. 5.40(B)) required considerable alterations. As I flipped the image, the text became inverted. Thus I had to digitally recreate and repaint the text to make it legible from left to right. I also digitally removed the figures and the bust from the image (see Fig. 5.40(C)) and added them as a layer that could be removed, as I wanted to reintroduce animated silhouetted versions of these figures and the bust. As with all of the other manipulated photographs, I altered the colour balance (in this case I added colour, as the source image was black and white) and tonal contrast. Fig. 5.40(B) and Fig. 5.40(D) show the transition from the still image to the animated version of the same scene in silhouette.



A



B



C



D

Figure 5.40 Stewart, M. 2012. Digital stills showing source image A, manipulated and composited image B, manipulated image C with figure and bust removed, and image D showing transition to silhouette animation [digital imagery]



Figure 5.41 Stewart, M., Stewart, P. 2009. Stills from original footage of BJ Vorster's broken bust outside the South African Police Museum in Pretoria [digital still, personal footage]

The incorporation of digital imagery within the Flash-animated scenes of the film also took the form of edited live footage of BJ Vorster's removed and broken bust (see Fig. 5.41). (As mentioned previously, the original footage documents the statue in situ on a dumping site outside of the South African Police Museum in Pretoria in 2008). This footage was inserted into *The dream of the statue* scene and edited in such a way as to portray the scene as though from BJ Vorster's eye-view. This scene follows on from the scene at John Vorster Square, showing the initial removal of Vorster's bust. It is not clear whether in reality the bust was taken directly from John Vorster Square to this dump at the South African Police Museum. However, for the sake of the dream narrative, BJ Vorster witnesses the removal of his statue and in the next scene the statue is revealed in pieces in this locale. I decided to keep this footage in its original colour format. I found that when I changed the footage from colour to monochromatic sepia or black and white, the impact of the destroyed bust on the dump was lost, as the broken parts of the statue at times became difficult to distinguish from the surrounding debris.

In summary, while I integrated and manipulated digital imagery within the Flash-animated scenes in various ways, I made an attempt to create a visual and conceptual cohesion throughout these scenes. For the most part (with the exception of the abovementioned footage and parts of the live footage of Grootte Schuur estate and the Rhodes Memorial) I avoided imagery in high colour and opted instead for monochromatic tones of sepia. This is the same colour tone that is repeated throughout the film and can be seen in the paper cut-out and paint-on-glass animated scenes. The monochromatic, sepia palette with which I chose to treat the digitally manipulated photographs was intended to evoke old sepia-tinted photographs. This was a conceptual decision partly influenced by my fascination with the enigmatic, visual quality of the archival imagery.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

This concluding discussion considers the research project as an independent 2D animated film within the context of the following: the impact of the digital platform and digital film technology on the production of my film, the relevance of this project to my teaching and research interests, and the significance of *Big Man* in terms of the present South African political and social climate.

6.1 Independent 2D experimental animation and the digital platform

While independent 2D animation production has been in existence since the early 20th century, until the advent of digital film technology the production of 2D independent animated film has mostly been the preserve of a few individuals. This is due to the fact that, before about 1990, making an independent 2D animated film was costly, labour-intensive and technically demanding. Nowadays, with advanced computer technology and animation, editing and stop-motion software, the process of producing an independent 2D animation is cheaper, faster and far less labour-intensive than it was using pre-digital technologies. In addition, computer hardware and software, and digital camera technologies are becoming more and more affordable and thus more accessible to the individual (Simon 2003: xiv). It is now possible for an individual or a small group of individuals to produce industry-standard animation on a moderate budget. This is true for both the production of commercial animation aimed at mainstream audiences, as well as the production of independent, experimental animations that are suited to animation festivals or the fine arts arena. In terms of my project, the relative cheapness and accessibility of computers and new digital technologies have made it possible for me to produce an independent experimental animation almost entirely on my own.

Pilling notes that the growing interest in independent animation is reflected in the significant rise in animation festivals — another support base for independent short film. Pilling regards the short film format as an ideal platform for experimentation and research, and animation festivals as the ideal platform for showcasing such films:

International festivals are another factor in raising the profile of animation and have mushroomed all over the world reflecting growing audience interest. Short films are the lifeblood of such festivals. Since most animation is the most labour intensive, shorts are often seen as the ‘research and development’ branch of the industry, a test bed for new ideas, approaches, styles and techniques. (Pilling 2001: 7)

Although there is growth in the animation industry in South Africa, there is little scope for independent, experimental animated film. For local animators and artists who explore experimental film, the primary outlet for showcasing their films in South Africa is within the arena of the exhibition space. There are film festivals in South Africa, but these mostly showcase short live-action films, feature films and commercial animation. The largest and longest-running film festival in South Africa is the Durban International Film Festival (begun in 1979) (DIFF 2014). In terms of existing precedents within the broader tradition of 2D animation in South Africa, the experimental approach of animated film is fairly innovative and thus adds to this field. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary nature of the film, in particular the integration and exploration of traditional fine art approaches and processes, and various 2D digital and traditional animation processes, can contribute to the growing emphasis on hybridisation in contemporary art-making in South Africa.

During the creation of my film, I discovered both the benefits and shortfalls of working solely on the digital platform. On the one hand, the ease and relative inexpensiveness of working this way was extremely advantageous. On the other hand, I found that the digital creative tools could not entirely replace the traditional painting and drawing media I was accustomed to. Rather, they were useful as parallel media, each suited to a particular visual aesthetic. When I began work on *Big Man* I planned to make the entire film using digital techniques, but realised after a time that I needed to explore some scenes with a visual aesthetic that I could only produce using traditional drawing and painting media. Fortunately, I also discovered that the digital platform and digital technology significantly eased the pain of working with more traditional animation techniques. Accessing stop-motion animation software not only sped up the traditional paper cut-out and paint-on-glass animation processes I was exploring, but also enabled me to view and review the movement in progress, for example. Processing, storing and editing individual frames digitally also had a significant labour saving impact. Thus I found that the animation

techniques and approaches I used that drew on traditional media (such as paint-on-glass, graphic and paint media on paper and paper cut-out animation) were generally greatly facilitated by the digital platform. While the digital platform allows for a greater diversity and extension of creative approaches, it does not necessarily challenge or threaten old approaches with obsolescence. Rather, it becomes an accessible, facilitating and labour-saving tool, making it possible for individuals to use the traditional animation processes without the expense, and extra time and labour such processes traditionally require.

The hybrid approach I adopted in the making of *Big Man* (the integration of film, digital imagery, and digital and traditional animation) is central to the genre of experimental animation, and is a common trait of independent animated short film. Generally, there is a growing hybridisation in animation due to new and developing digital technologies making animation production more accessible to independent film makers. Jane Pilling notes: “In the last 30 years the huge explosion in all kinds of animation produced around the world has led to a far greater diversity of style, technique and content” (Pilling 2001: 7). In this regard I would like to return briefly to my research question: What are the interdisciplinary and research potentials of the experimental animation platform?

That experimental animation is an expressive medium that pushes interdisciplinary boundaries has been characteristic of this genre since its early inception. Peter Weibel in his essay “The post-media condition” discusses how the emergence of old technological media such as photography and film exerted a significant influence on traditional artistic media, to the extent that not only were these innovations “a new branch on the tree of art but actually transformed the tree of art itself” (Weibel 2006). This can be said of the development of experimental animated film (which, as film, falls into the category of old technological media) in the early part of the 20th century, which partly developed as a means of finding a new language and new possibilities for traditional artistic practice. Most importantly, the experimental animation genre provided a platform for “the move of art into film” and gave traditional artistic media the added dimension of time (Leslie 2002: 37). Experimental animation not only extended the vocabulary of traditional artistic media but also allowed for the mixing of the media, consequently blurring the boundaries of previously medium-specific genres. While the interdisciplinary potential of experimental animation has been there since its inception, Pilling points out that the digital platform and new technological media have reinvigorated independent animation by further broadening

the scope for it to cross disciplinary boundaries (2001: 7), and making it much more accessible for the independent film maker. Moreover, Weibel claims the one of the most significant impacts of digital media and technology on creative practice is that it allows for a greater “mixing of the media-specific idiosyncratic worlds of the media” (Weibel 2006). It is thus not surprising that experimental animation is thriving in the digital era, because with its ability to mix media it is well suited to this aspect of the digital platform.

I also discovered through the process of making my film that the traditional artistic processes I used were not new to my experience but that approaching these artistic processes through the digital platform was. My use of digital technology relates to Christiane Paul’s notions of the digital platform as a creative tool and as a medium. In Paul’s hypothesis the use of the digital platform as a tool usually means that an artist accesses digital technology to facilitate the creation and processing of an art object. The nature of the art object in this case can vary greatly. It may exhibit distinctive digital qualities or its properties may be indistinguishable from analogue processes (Paul 2002: 472). As detailed in Chapter Four, my use of traditional artistic media was greatly facilitated by the digital platform. While I approached these artistic media (and related hand-crafted animation processes) in the traditional way, individual animation frames were photographed, stored, edited and processed digitally. This approach to digital technology and the creative process is distinct from Paul’s explanation of when the digital platform is used as a medium. In this case the digital arena is always present in the art object, from its inception to its reception and methods of storage and display (2002: 472). This is typical of net art, interactive art and digital installation art, for example. As discussed in Chapter Five, while my project is not reliant on its identification with the digital platform to communicate its content, it does rely (in part) on digital animation applications such as Flash, which is characteristically digital in process and final appearance. The project’s final output as a digital file means its dissemination and the nature of its display can either exist decisively within the digital realm (if uploaded for viewing and dissemination on a website, Vimeo or YouTube, for example), or it can be screened in a theatre or exhibition setting where its display can be either analogue or digital. Thus, in answer to the research question, “How can the digital platform act as both a medium and a tool for the animation process?”, I see my project as having accessed the digital platform as both a medium and a tool.

6.2 The importance of the PhD study to research and academic development

Digital arts (which includes 2D animation practices) is a relatively new, but rapidly developing, academic discipline at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). 2D animation is not taught as a definitive animation studies programme, but rather the various traditional and experimental animation processes are introduced as a component of a programme that includes within its syllabus interactive digital art, digital design, film, and digital photography. The interdisciplinary nature of my study (its integration of traditional media, digital media, film, and traditional and experimental animation processes) has allowed me to incorporate my methods and findings into my teaching.

Returning to the research question, “What are the interdisciplinary and research potentials of the experimental animation platform?”, the interdisciplinary approach of the study, and its integration of digital and traditional creative processes, negates perceived anxieties (within the traditional creative disciplines) that digital media and the digital platform threaten to replace traditional creative media. WJT Mitchell articulates this fear in his article, “Showing seeing: a critique of visual culture” (2001). He perceives the growing importance of digital culture, technology and digital media within academia as partly attributed to the rise of “disciplinary anxieties” within traditional disciplines, which he claims is sometimes articulated in terms of a “territorial grumpiness” (Mitchell 2001: 166). Contrary to this perception, I have found that using the digital platform as a creative tool neither dilutes nor serves to replace traditional media. Rather, the mediation of the digital platform can invigorate traditional media and broaden the ways in which they are conventionally conceived, processed and accessed. I believe my study (the film and its supporting visual output) is a testament to this. On a related point, Weibel talks about how with “the practices of the new technological media we can also embark on a fresh evaluation of the practices of the old non-technological media” (2006). One can hold up the new media practice of experimental animation against the old technological medium of experimental animation as an example. In this regard the digital platform primarily becomes a facilitating tool for the traditional experimental animation platform, and broadens the scope for hybridisation and integration in way that was not possible in the analogue era.

Extending my knowledge of 2D digital animation and image making applications has been

invaluable for demonstrating digital image making and animation processes that do not rely on traditional painting and drawing skills. Many of the image-manipulation skills I have explored, for example, can be adapted to graphic design projects that involve image appropriation, composition and manipulation. These approaches are suited to students with an interest in and aptitude for digital image making, but who do not have a fine arts background or skills. For the same reasons, learning digital animation processes in platforms such as Flash has been useful for introducing and teaching digital animation processes. In relation to my personal research interests, I think this project has resolved some of my own creative issues. As previously discussed, a long-term interest in making animated film and my more recent familiarity with the digital platform was a primary motivation for moving into animated film. This remains true, but underlying these motivations was a personal frustration, not so much with traditional painting and drawing media, but with visually resolving my subject matter and narrative ideas within a single still image. Thus the logical progression appeared to involve exploring the same ideas but within animated film. While this move from the still to the moving image was a revelation for my creative development, I am aware that similar issues have occupied artists since the birth of modernism. Early modernist painters such as Walter Ruttmann and Viking Eggeling, for example, moved from creating still images to paintings “that move in time as well as space” with an emphasis on the rhythmic dynamics of the abstract elements of painting as they relate to the added dimensions of time (Moritz 1997: 223). My motivation was somewhat different, in that I wanted to explore the same visual subject matter I had been exploring within still imagery by using a time-based visual narrative. My initial plan was to adapt my traditional painting and drawing skills to the digital platform and to create the entire film digitally. However, while this worked for many aspects of my film, I learnt that I could only get the desired effect I wanted for some scenes by returning to traditional painting and drawing media, hence the paper cut-out and paint-on-glass animated scenes. I also learnt that I could apply and integrate these media into the film by using the digital platform as a facilitating tool. This process broadened not only my digital knowledge, but also my knowledge of traditional paper cut-out and paint-on-glass animation, both of which were first used by modernist artists and film makers during the early 20th century.

6.3 'Big Man' and its relevance to the contemporary South African context

While the content of the film, with its 'Big Man' theme, uses BJ Vorster as the central character, the intention was not to single out Vorster as the ultimate South African 'Big Man', although he undoubtedly remains an important figure in the history of Afrikaner nationalism. Conversely, the aim of including Dr HF Verwoerd and the portraits of the subsequent heads of state of South Africa ending with President Jacob Zuma, was to imply that South Africa has had more than one 'Big Man' that the narrative could equally apply to. That the film ends with an animated portrait of Zuma is not accidental. He is, of course, the incumbent president of South Africa, and so is the natural conclusion of the linear sequence of portraits. More importantly though, Zuma's visage is the final image the audience is left with, and they are also left with the implication that he is our latest 'Big Man'. Indeed, Zuma's accession to power (via the ousting of former president Thabo Mbeki), his traditionalist and populist appeal, the loyalty he seems to inspire amongst the ANC faithful and, indeed, even his physical bearing, seem to make the term 'Big Man' more than appropriate.

The narrative arc of the animation is, however, more hopeful than realistic. I have created a fiction in which the eponymous 'Big Man' is made to reflect on and atone for his inhumanity. In reality, of course, this seldom happens. As Orizio points out when recounting his discussion with fallen Polish dictator Wojciech Jaruzelski, the 'Big Man' usually "suffers from a sense of injustice. ... [T]hey say I am a murderer, he told me. But I was a politician. I had my ideals. I believed in Socialism. If I am guilty, then so is a whole generation. Anyone in my position would have done the same. This reflection also sustains [most] other former tyrants" (2003: 5). This sentiment is similarly reflected by Idi Amin, who Orizio asks, years after he was deposed: "Do you feel any remorse?" "No, only nostalgia", was Amin's reply (2003: 35). The inclusion of Nelson Mandela and FW De Klerk in this final series of portraits of heads of state may also seem controversial. While I do not believe that Nelson Mandela, or for that matter FW De Klerk, are 'Big Man' characters in the sense that my film has explored, I decided to include them as they are an integral part of South Africa's political history. Furthermore, the inclusion of these two heads of state who reflect more positive aspects of politics and leadership corresponds with the biblical prophecy in *The Book of Daniel* that after Nebuchadnezzar's reign more kingdoms shall arise, some of a lesser and some of a greater evil (Daniel 2:38–39).

Another factor that highlights the relevance of the film in relation to the contemporary South African context is the recent vandalising by students, and the subsequent removal by the University of Cape Town (UCT) from its grounds, of a prominent statue of Rhodes. The statue was vandalised by UCT students who “argued that it was offensive to black students and that memories of the brutal heritage Rhodes represented should not be preserved” (Laing 2015). The media images showing the removal of Rhodes’ statue (Fig. 6.1) echo those showing the bust of BJ Vorster being removed from John Vorster Square (Fig. 5.41).



Figure 6.1 The removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes from the grounds of UCT (April 9 2015) [digital photograph] [Online] Available: http://i.telegraph.co.uk/multimedia/archive/03261/rhodes-lead_3261770b.jpg (Accessed 6.09.2015)

Rhodes was a fervent British imperialist with a grand vision of the white man colonising the African continent. He is perceived as having the same “the same characteristics as Hitler, Napoleon and Saddam Hussein” (Waterman 1996). Journalist Rebecca Hodes describes the statue of Rhodes as “a tribute to a man who, more than anyone else (with the arguable exceptions of Frederick Lugard and Belgium’s Leopold II) has come to embody the colonial dispossession and oppression of Africans” (Hodes 2015). That the film, *Big Man*, is set within Rhodes’ original homestead and estate at Groote Schuur, and that the central Nebuchadnezzar/BJ Vorster/Big Man character both inhabits and becomes demeaned in this space, is not simply fortuitous. While I chose this setting because it accurately reflects Vorster’s context during his tenure as Prime Minister of South Africa, I

was simultaneously aware of Rhodes' racist worldview and despotic ambition (Millin 1926: 53). Interestingly, a *Sunday Times* newspaper article speculating on where the statue of Rhodes would finally end up after its removal from the grounds of UCT shows a photograph of the Heritage Foundation storeroom at the site of the Voortrekker Monument in Cape Town that houses statues and busts of former South African leaders. In this photograph, behind a bust of Jan Smuts, is a bust of BJ Vorster identical to the one that was removed from John Vorster Square (and later filmed in the 'back yard' of the South African Police Museum in Pretoria (see Fig. 5.41). It is possible that replicas of this particular bust were made; however, it is also possible that this is where the bust of BJ Vorster was finally taken after it disappeared from the South African Police Museum¹⁸ soon after we filmed it.



Figure 6.2Bust of BJ Vorster (second from the front) in the Heritage Foundation storeroom at the Voortrekker Monument in Cape Town (2015) [digital photograph] [Online] Available: <http://www.timeslive.co.za/incoming/2015/04/11/statue-graveyard.jpg/ALTERNATES/>

Lastly, my film can also be placed in an emerging history of artistic commentary on the 'Big Man' theme in South Africa. Some of the key figures here are, of course, William Kentridge, Robert Hodgins, Brett Murray, Ayanda Mabulu and Jonathan Shapiro. As outlined in Chapter Three, my exploration of the work and ideas of these artists relates to my exploration of the 'Big Man' figure as both an archetype and as a specific individual. While my film strongly identifies with Kentridge's exploration of archetypal 'Big Men'

¹⁸I emailed the Heritage Foundation (17 April 2015) enquiring whether the bust shown in this *SundayTimes* photograph is the same one that was removed from John Vorster Square. I have received no response to date.

characters, my work differs from Kentridge's in that his 'Big Man' character of Soho Eckstein and his Ubu-inspired works owe their origins more to the tropes of early European modernism than to the actual history and politics of South Africa, which lie at the centre of my work. On the other hand, Hodgins's Ubu-inspired works, while also archetypal, re-interpret the Western archetypal 'Big Man' as an African idiom. This approach is tangentially related to my reimagining of the Western biblical story of Nebuchadnezzar in terms of BJ Vorster's South African context. Even though the subject matter of my film draws from Western visual and textual narratives that investigate various portrayals of the 'Big man' figure, the focus on Vorster as the central character is closer to the portrayal of the specific 'Big Man' figure as seen in the recent works of Brett Murray, Ayanda Mabulu and Jonathan Shapiro. Moreover, my reference to Jacob Zuma in the closing scene of the film (where his 'Big Man' status is implied) also echoes recent works by these three artists.

In answer to my research question, "Does the film represent the theme of the 'Big Man' in such a way as to make it relevant to both the South African context and to a broader international audience?", I would argue that as a contribution to South African cultural production my film offers viewers an exploration of the nature of power, its place in the political and social history of South Africa, and its ongoing importance within post-apartheid South Africa. While the historical details, contexts and key players in my film may not be familiar to an international audience, the overarching narrative of Nebuchadnezzar and the visual references in Blake's *Nebuchadnezzar* prints hopefully make the film accessible beyond the South African experience. In terms of existing precedents within the broader tradition of 2D animation in South Africa, the experimental approach of *Big Man* is fairly innovative by South African standards and thus contributes to this field. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary nature of the film — in particular the integration and exploration of traditional fine art approaches and processes and various 2D digital and traditional animation processes — contributes to the growing emphasis on hybridisation in contemporary art-making in South Africa.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 2.1 Stewart, M., (2012), Initial Visual Storyboard A, [digital drawing].....	15
Figure 2.2 Stewart, M., (2012), Initial Visual Storyboard B, [digital drawing].....	16
Figure 2.3 Stewart, M., (2012), Initial Visual Storyboard C, [digital drawing, pen and ink on paper].....	17
Figure 2.4 Big Man goes Bust, (1997), [digital image], [Online], Available: < http://heritage.thetimes.co.za/BJ_Vorster >, (Accessed 1. 09. 2014)	19
Figure 2.5 Stewart, M., (2012), Storyboard Sketches: The dream of the statue, [pencil on paper].....	19
Figure 2.6 Stewart, M., (2013), Log showing walk cycle plotting for Betsie Verwoerd, two family members and pallbearers: Prologue scene (Big Man), [pencil on paper].....	23
Figure 2.7 Stewart, M., (2009), State Funeral, [digital drawing]	26
Figure 2.8 Stewart, M., (2010), The aftermath of an assassination; street scene from the state funeral, [digital drawing], (The KZN Jabulisa Exhibition, Tatham Art Gallery Pietermaritzburg)	27
Figure 2.9 Stewart, M., (2010), The aftermath of an assassination; back room machinations, [digital drawing], (Staff exhibition, Unisa Art Gallery, Johannesburg).....	27
Figure 2.10 Stewart, M., (2010), Out of time; a Pierneef landscape revisited, [digital drawing], (UKZN Alumni Exhibition: St Paul's School Art Gallery, London)	28
Figure 2.11 Stewart, M., (2010), BJ Vorster In bed, [digital drawing], (Centre for Visual Art, Staff Exhibition, Carnegie Art Gallery, Kimberley).....	28
Figure 2.12 Stewart, M., (2010), Telefunken, [digital drawing], (Centre for Visual Art, Staff Exhibition, Carnegie Art Gallery, Kimberley)	29
Figure 2.13 Stewart, M., (2010), Umbrella, hat, hooks, [digital drawing], (Centre for Visual Art, Staff Exhibition, Carnegie Art Gallery, Kimberley)	30
Figure 2.14 Stewart, M., (2010), Radio, [digital drawing], (Centre for Visual Art, Staff Exhibition, Carnegie Art Gallery, Kimberley)	31

Figure 2.15 Stewart, (2010), M., PJ's, hat, umbrella and coat, [digital drawing], (Centre for Visual Art, Staff Exhibition, Carnegie Art Gallery, Kimberley)	32
Figure 2.16 Stewart, M., (2010), A morning constitutional, [digital drawing], (Centre for Visual Art, Staff Exhibition, Carnegie Art Gallery, Kimberley)	32
Figure 2.17 Stewart, M., (2010), Golf clubs, [digital drawing], (Centre for Visual Art, Staff Exhibition, Carnegie Art Gallery, Kimberley)	33
Figure 3.1 Drawing for the film "Mine," 1991, [Online], Available: < https://cdn.kastatic.org/ka-perseus-images/46a04b99f4b2cc72ab70044ad6088e289a5ef891.jpg >, (Accessed 6. 06. 2016)	46
Figure 3.2 Drawing from 'Tide Table' (Soho sleeping), 2003, [Online], Available: < http://prod-images.exhibit-e.com/www_mariangoodman_com/c16028fc.jpg >, (Accessed 6. 06. 2016)	48
Figure 3.3 Véritable Portrait for Monsieur Ubu, 1896, [Online], Available: < https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/83/V%C3%A9ritable_portrait_de_Monsieur_Ubu.png/397px-V%C3%A9ritable_portrait_de_Monsieur_Ubu.png >, (Accessed 10. 06. 2016)	50
Figure 3.4 Still from Ubu Tells the Truth , 1997, [Online], Available: < http://www.squarecylinder.com/wp-content/uploads/image/KENTRIDGE/Ubu%20Tells%20the%20Truth_2.jpg >, (Accessed 10. 06. 2016)	52
Figure 3.5 Still from Ubu Tells the Truth, 1997, [Online], Available: < http://citygallery.org.nz/sites/default/files/Kentridge%20UBU%20news.jpg >, (Accessed 10. 06. 2016)	52
Figure 3.6 Stills from Fantasmagorie, 1908, [Online], Available: < http://www.tmgonline.nl/index.php/tmg/article/view/2/51 >, (Accessed 14. 06. 2016)	54
Figure 3.7 The Nose, 2010, [Online], Available: < http://www.whitehotmagazine.com/UserFiles/image/2010/kentridge%20nose/The-Nose_4.jpg >, (Accessed 10. 06. 2016)	56
Figure 3.8 Ubu Tells the Truth (Archived Editions), 1995 – 1997, [Online], Available: < http://davidkrutprojects.com/artworks/ubu-tells-the-truth-by-william-kentridge-archived-editions >, (Accessed 11. 06. 2016).....	58
Figure 3.9 Ubu and the Black Politician, 1983, [Online], Available: < http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539/11071/Nathan%20Jansen%20van%20Vuuren%20Thesis.pdf?sequence=2 >, (Accessed 12. 06. 2016)	62
Figure 3.10 Ubu and the Commanders-in-Chief (1981/82), [Online], Available: < http://www.artthrob.co.za/02feb/images/hodgins04a.jpg >, (Accessed 10. 06. 2016).....	62
Figure 3.11 Ubu Interrogator II , 1983, [Online], Available: < http://lot-images.atgmedia.com/SR/35895/2916124/595-201411417720_original.jpg >, (Accessed 10. 06. 2016)	64
Figure 3.12 No.1 France: The Dreyfus Affair – 1894 (1996), [Online], Available: < http://www.outofthecube.co.za/artists/102/img_1435.jpg >, (Accessed 13. 06. 2016)	65
Figure 3.13 No 3. Berlin – Inflation – 1923, (1996), [Online], Available: < http://www.outofthecube.co.za/artists/102/img_1439.jpg >, (Accessed 14. 06. 2016)	66
Figure 3.14 No. 6 Central Africa? East Africa? 1960 (1996), [Online], Available: < http://www.outofthecube.co.za/artists/102/img_1446.jpg >, (Accessed 10. 06. 2016)	66

Figure 3.15 A Wicked Man Sumptuously Attired (1996), [Online], Available: < http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539/11071/Nathan%20Jansen%20van%20Vuuren%20Thesis.pdf?sequence=2 >, (Accessed 10. 06. 2016).....	68
Figure 3.16 Lenin Lived, Lenin is alive, Lenin Will Live, 1967, [Online], Available: < http://soviet-art.ru/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Lenin-lived-Lenin-lives-Lenin-will-live.jpg >, (Accessed 17. 06. 2016).....	71
Figure 3.17 The Spear, (2012), [Online], Available: < https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/5/59/The_Spear_-_a_portrait_of_Jacob_Zuma,_by_Brett_Murray.jpg >, (Accessed 10. 06. 2016).....	73
Figure 3.18 All Dressed up and Nowhere to Go, (2015), [Online], Available: < http://www.goodman-gallery.com/files/upload/inventory/29664Inventory29764-1020.jpg >, (Accessed 01. 07. 2016).....	74
Figure 3.19 The Land of the Blind ... (2015), [Online], Available: < http://www.ia-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/a7/f8/77/a7f8775820d777c912ccba076513016f.jpg >, (Accessed 01. 07. 2016)	75
Figure 3.20 Ngcono ihlwempu kunesibhanxa sesityebi (Better poor than a rich puppet) (2010), [Online], Available: < https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/d/d6/Ngcono_ihlwempu_kunesibhanxo_sesityebi_%28painting%29.jpg >, (Accessed 01. 07. 2016)	76
Figure 3.21 Mshini Wam (Weapon of Mass Destruction), 2012, [Online], Available: < http://cdn.mg.co.za/content/documents/2012/08/28/Umshini-Wam-%28Weapon-of-Mass-Destruction%29.jpg >, (Accessed 04. 07. 2016)	77
Figure 3.22 Spear Down my Throat (The Pornography of Power), 2015, [Online], Available: < https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/564x/fd/74/17/fd74174c477236ac0d8be4de6c38d703.jpg >, (Accessed 04. 07. 2016)	78
Figure 3.23 Butcher-in-Chief , 2013, [Online], Available: < http://www.worldart.co.za/images/work/1423045176_big.jpg >	80
Figure 3.24 Ingwe ayizidli ngamabala isakuluma ikaka okweSihlunu senyama, ayityiwa ikaka noba ungalamba ungagabha. (Prostitutes), 2016, [Online], Available: < http://www.culture-review.co.za/images/stateCapture1.JPG >, Accessed 04. 07. 2016).....	82
Figure 3.25 <i>Isifebe asilele sitshela kwisende le'engcinizelo (Impotent)</i> , 2016, [Online], Available: https://4.bp.blogspot.com/-ZPXVfGq8YPY/V4VgnhrLKsI/AAAAAAAAArck/Nmw_ZaOuAFQ-4BU7P_Cdwj64M8dBdtK9wCLCB/s1600/stateCapture.JPG >, (Accessed 04. 07. 2016)	83
(Figure 3.26 ANC Women's League Protesting in support of President Jacob Zuma, 2015, [Online], Available: < https://www.zapiro.com/cartoons/151101st >, (Accessed 04. 07. 2016)	85
Figure 3.27 With apologies to Brett Murray, No apologies to President Jacob Zuma, Want respect?... Earn it!, 2012, [Online], Available: < https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/564x/cd/e3/60/cde3609ab5830d17f0a66308e507232a.jpg >, (Accessed 04. 07. 2016)	85
Figure 3.28 “Though sex is his publicised sport, Jacob Zuma took the dick painting to court, Suing Brett's free expression, Confirmed the impression, He's as big a dick as we thought!”, 2012, [Online], Available: < http://cdn.mg.co.za/crop/content/cartoons/2012/07/06/120705 >, (Accessed 06. 07. 2016)	86

Figure 3.29 2006, [Online], Available: < https://loveworldnewsagencyblog.files.wordpress.com/2009/04/stain_remover.gif > (Accessed 08. 07. 2016),	88
Figure 3.30 Zapiro cartoon, Mail and Guardian, 2006, [Online], Available: < https://www.opinion-internationale.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ZumaShower-Zapiro.jpg >, (Accessed 11. 07. 2016).....	89
Figure 3.31 Zapiro cartoon, 2008, [Online], Available: < http://cdn.mg.co.za/content/documents/2012/10/24/zapiro.jpg >, (Accessed 09. 07. 2016)	90
Figure 3.32 Zapiro cartoon, 2014, [Online], Available: < http://thisisafrica.me/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2014/05/New-Age-remarks-on-Zumas-clothes-as-Outfit-stunning.jpg >, (Accessed 04. 07. 2016).....	92
Figure 3.33 Ingres, J., (1806), Napoleon 1 on his Imperial Throne, [oil on canvas], [Online], Available: < http://ts1.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608004852160005190&w=116&h=151&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7 >, (Accessed 4. 05. 2013).....	95
Figure 3.34 Velázquez, D., (1650), Portrait of Innocent X, [oil on canvas], [Online], Available: < http://ts3.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608042501846730823&w=119&h=149&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7 >, (Accessed 4. 05. 2013).....	96
Figure 3.35 Eisenstein, S., (1928), Battleship Potemkin, [digital image], [Online], Available: < http://ts2.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.607998229321613765&w=210&h=152&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7 >, (Accessed 4. 05. 2013).....	99
Figure 3.36 Bacon, F., (1953), Study for Portrait VII, [oil on canvas], [Online], Available: < http://ts3.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608052861302342688&w=106&h=142&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7 >, (Accessed 4. 05. 2013).....	100
Figure 3.37 Bacon, F., (1953), Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X, [oil on canvas], [Online], Available: < http://ts4.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608046165451866117&w=190&h=141&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7 >, (Accessed 4. 05. 2013).....	101
Figure 3.38 Stewart, M., (2013), Stills from Big Man, [gauche and glycerine on glass]	102
Figure 3.39 Bacon, F., (1949), Head 11, [oil on canvas], [Online], Available: < http://ts1.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.607985967192343906&w=300&h=300&c=0&pid=1.9&rs=0&p=0 >, (Accessed 4. 05. 2013)	104
Figure 3.40 Bacon, F., (1944), Study of a Baboon, [oil on canvas], [Online], Available: < http://ts4.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608041466758892373&w=133&h=147&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7 >, (Accessed 4. 05. 2013).....	105
Figure 3.41 Stewart, M., Still from Big Man, (2012), [digital image]	106
Figure 3.42 Stewart, M., Still from Big Man, (2012), [digital image]	107
Figure 3.43 Stewart, M., Still from Big Man, (2013), [digital image]	108
Figure 3.44 Untitled, 2010	108
Figure 3.45 Blake, W., (1795), Nebuchadnezzar, [engraving], [Online], Available: < http://ts1.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608027615496769345&w=215&h=152&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7 >, (Accessed 7. 05. 2013).....	109
Figure 3.46 Blake, W., (1795), Nebuchadnezzar, [engraving], [Online], Available: < http://ts1.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608042136776150109&w=300&h=300&c=0&pid=1.9&rs=0&p=0 >, (Accessed 7. 05. 2013).....	110

Figure 3.47 Blake, W., (1795), Nebuchadnezzar, [engraving], [Online], Available: < http://ts4.explicit.bing.net/th?id=HN.607994269371728105&w=213&h=145&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7 >, (Accessed 7. 05. 2013)	111
Figure 3.48 Stewart, M., Blake, W., (2014), (1795), Cropped images from Epilogue scene (Big Man) and Blake's Nebuchadnezzar, [engraving], [Online], Available: < http://ts1.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608042136776150109&w=300&h=300&c=0&pid=1.9&rs=0&p=0 >, (Accessed 7. 05. 2013).....	113
Figure 4.1 Ofuji, N., (1952) The Whale, [Online], Available: < http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-LB043YcQjB4/TtlexFfWriI/AAAAAAAAAIR0/ZSkqaRTZOIQ/s1600/kujira5.jpg >, (Accessed 2. 07. 2016)	117
Figure 4.2 Reiniger, L., (1926), Colour tinted background in The Adventures of Prince Achmed [Online], Available: < http://i1249.photobucket.com/albums/hh514/djevojka1/LotteReiniger/5408461542_c4fc93f472_b.jpg >, (Accessed 2. 07. 2016)	118
Figure 4.3 Reiniger, L., (1920), Reiniger's first 'trick table', Berlin 1920, [Online], Available: < http://www.awn.com/mag/issue1.3/images/Reiniger8a.gif >, (Accessed 2. 07. 2016).....	119
Figure 4.4 Reiniger, L., (1923), Reiniger's multi-plane 'trick table', [Online], Available: < http://img.over-blog-kiwi.com/1/85/08/28/20151108/ob_07693d_lotte-reiniger-et-son-equipe.jpg >, (Accessed 2. 07. 2016)	119
Figure 4.5 Ruttman, W., (1921), Still from Lichtspiel Opus 1, [Online], Available: < http://www.see-this-sound.at/files/60/large/large.jpg?1273514587 >, (Accessed 3. 07. 2016)	121
Figure 4.6 Reiniger, L., (1926), Lotte Reiniger at work on Prince Achmed, [Online], Available: < http://uschefnerarchive.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/lotte_featured.jpg >, (Accessed 3. 07. 2016)	122
Figure 4.7 Norstein, Y., (1985), Norstein at work on The Overcoat, [Online], Available: < http://proyectoidis.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/I-38-ISKUS-norsh-f27_640.jpg >, (Accessed 3. 07. 2016)	122
Figure 4.8 McLaren, N., (1958), McLaren working on Le Merle with Evelyn Lambert (who collaborated with McLaren in this film), [Online], Available: < http://animationresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/image179.jpg >, (Accessed 4. 07. 2016)	123
Figure 4.9 South Park: The Spirit of Christmas - Jesus VS Santa, (1997), [Online], Available: https://cdn1.lockerdome.com/uploads/cfb9ad72dda2a58140c7167f8dd768753ec4ce1d4909f4656c3e1189bcd3114f_large , (Accessed 6. 07. 2016)	125
Figure 4.10 Charlie and Lola I will not Ever Never Eat and Tomato, (2005), [Online], Available: < http://cdn.iview.abc.net.au/thumbs/460/ZY7657A001S00557fb128875f43.68441362_1280.jpg >, Accessed 6. 07. 2016)	125
Figure 4.11 Three-minute animated sequence form Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, (2010), [Online], Available: < https://www.fxguide.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/10Nov/hp7/hp7_anim.jpg >, (Accessed 4. 07. 2016).....	126
Figure 4.12 Stewart, M., (2013), Still from Big Man showing funeral procession with paper cut-outs, [pen and ink on paper and digital drawing]	128
Figure 4.13 Bartosch, B., (1932), Still from Le Idée, [Online], Available: < http://cinecorner.fr/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/l-idee.jpg >, (Accessed 4. 07. 2016).....	129
Figure 4.14 Bartosch, B., (1932) Still from Le Idée, [Online], Available: < https://i.ytimg.com/vi/zT_PCFqd2M/hqdefault.jpg >, (Accessed 4. 07. 2016)	130

Figure 4.15 Stewart, M., (2013), Paper puppets from Prologue scene (Big Man): (entourage), [card, paper, split-pins, pen and ink]	132
Figure 4.16 Stewart, M., (2013), Paper puppets from Prologue scene (Big Man): (pallbearers), [card, paper, split-pins, pen and ink]	133
Figure 4.17 Stewart, M., Paper puppets from Prologue scene (Big Man): (pallbearers with coffin), (2013), [card, paper, split-pins, pen and ink]	134
Figure 4.18 Stewart, M., (2013), Page from walk cycle log, [pencil and paper]	135
Figure 4.19 Stewart, M., (2013), Template for police dog, puppet, [coloured pencils on tracing paper].....	136
Figure 4.20 Stewart, M., (2013), Paper puppet of police dog, [black card and split-pins].....	137
Figure 4.21 Stewart, M., (2013), Animating table showing dog puppet and diagram of the dog walk cycle, [black card and split-pins; digital drawing].....	138
Figure 4.22 Stewart, M., (2013), Log showing walk cycle of dog puppet, [pencil and paper]	139
Figure 4.23 Still from Dr HF Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa, (1966), [still from BBC archival footage: Dr Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa)	139
Figure 4.24 Stewart, M., (2013), Still from Prologue scene (Big Man): (entourage and military guard), [black card, pen and ink and split-pins; digital drawing].....	140
Figure 4.25 Still from Dr HF Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa, (1966), [still from BBC archival footage: Dr Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa]	141
Figure 4.26 Stewart, M., (2013), Still from Big Man (pallbearers), [black card, pen and ink and split-pins; digital drawing].....	142
Figure 4.27 Stewart, M., (2013), Digital drawing for Prologue scene (Big Man) (the Union Buildings, Pretoria, [digital drawing].....	143
Figure 4.28 Still from Dr HF Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa, (1966), [digital still from BBC archival footage: Dr Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa).....	144
Figure 4.29 Stewart, M., (2013), Digital drawing for Prologue scene (Big Man) (car and military guard), [black card, pen and ink and split-pins; digital drawing].....	145
Figure 4.30 Still from Dr HF Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa, (1966), [digital still from BBC archival footage: Dr Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa).....	145
Figure 4.31 Stewart, M., (2013), Digital drawing of crowd scene for Prologue scene (Big Man), [digital drawing].....	146
Figure 4.32 Stewart, M., (2013), Still from Prologue scene (Big Man) (entourage), [black card, pen and ink and split-pins; digital drawing].....	147
Figure 4.33 Stewart, M., (2013), Still from Prologue scene (Big Man) (pallbearers), [black card, pen and ink and split-pins; digital drawing].....	147
Figure 4.34 Stewart, M., (2013), Still from Prologue scene (Big Man) (dog), [black card, split-pins; digital drawing]	148
Figure 4.35 Stewart, M., , Still from Prologue scene (Big Man) (BJ Vorster), [black card, pen and ink and split-pins; digital drawing].....	148
Figure 4.36 Stewart, M., (2013), Digital image for Prologue scene (Big Man) (Heroes' Acre), [digital drawing]	149
Figure 4.37 Still from Dr HF Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa, (1966), [digital still from BBC archival footage: Dr Verwoerd's Funeral, Pretoria, S. Africa]	150

Figure 4.38 Found photographs of Heroes' Acre, (2012), [Online], Available: < http://ts4.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.607991666614800156&w=198&h=146&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7 (Accessed 12. 09. 2012).....	150
Figure 4.39 Stewart, M., (2013), Still from Prologue scene (Big Man) (entourage at Hero's Acre), [black card, pen and ink and split-pins; digital drawing]	151
Figure 4.40 Stewart, M., (2013), Still from Prologue scene (Big Man) (BJ Vorster at Hero's Acre), [black card, pen and ink and split-pins, digital drawing]	151
Figure 4.41 Stewart, M., (2012), Paper cut-out puppet of BJ Vorster, with additional segments showing direction of movement, [black card, pen and ink and split-pins]	153
Figure 4.42 Stewart, M., (2012), Still from Prologue scene (Big Man) (B. J. Vorster on the steps of the Union Buildings), [black card, pen and ink and split-pins, digital drawing].....	154
Figure 4.43 Still from archival footage (BJ Vorster on the steps of the Union Buildings), (1966), [digital image].....	154
Figure 4.44 Stewart, M., (2013), Torso and legs of paper cut-out puppet of BJ Vorster, [black card and split-pins].....	155
Figure 4.45 Stewart, M., (2013), Head segments created for BJ Vorster's inaugural speech, [card, paper, split-pins, pen and ink]	156
Figure 4.46 Stewart, M., (2013), Examples of mouth segments created for BJ Vorster's inaugural speech, [pen and ink on tracing paper]	157
Figure 4.47 Stewart, M., (2013), Images of the various layers that made up the puppet used for BJ Vorster's inaugural speech, [card, paper, split-pins, pen and ink].....	158
Figure 4.48 Norstein, Y., Still from the Overcoat, (1985), [Online], Available: < https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/2b/b0/00/2bb0003fec4c0f7e7c7e83b9d47bbe01.jpg >, (Accessed 7. 06. 2016)	160
Figure 4.49 Norstein, Y., (1985), Norstein demonstrating his technique of animating with small pieces of celluloid (used in The Overcoat), [Online], Available: < https://i.ytimg.com/vi/o-7D4x5UaIE/hqdefault.jpg >, (Accessed 7. 06. 2016).....	160
Figure 4.50 Fedorenko, E., (1999), Still from Village of Idiots, [Online], Available: < http://www.awn.com/oscars00/images/village00.gif >, (Accessed 7. 06. 2016)	161
Figure 4.51 Stewart, M., (2013), Digital drawing of microphones for Prologue scene (Big Man), [digital drawing].....	163
Figure 4.52 Stewart, M., (2013), Digital drawing for Prologue scene (Big Man) (Union Buildings, Pretoria), [digital drawing]	164
Figure 4.53 Leaf, C., (1976), Still from The Street, [Online], Available: < http://carolineleaf.com/images/Filmography/The_Street_2.jpg >, (Accessed 7. 06. 2016)	166
Figure 4.54 Leaf, C., (1976 and 1979) Caroline leaf at work on The Street and The Interview,[Online], Available: < http://www.carolineleaf.com/direct_animation.php >, (Accessed 7. 06. 2016)	167
Figure 4.55 Gratz, J., (1992), Stills from Mona Lisa Descending the Stairs, [Online], Available: < http://linesandcolors.com/2006/07/30/joan-c-gratz/ >, (Accessed 7. 06. 2016).....	168
Figure 4.56 Stills from Mona Lisa Descending the Stairs, 1992, [Online], Available: < http://www.akbanksanat.com/images/default-source/festival-filmleri/a3—mona-lisa-descending-a-staircase.jpeg?sfvrsn=0 >, (Accessed 7. 06. 2016)	169
Figure 4.57 Stewart, M., (2013), Paint-on-glass stills from Epilogue scene (Big Man), [gauche and glycerine on glass]	169

Figure 4.58 Stewart, M., (2013), Paint-on-glass stills from Epilogue scene (Big Man), [gauche and glycerine on glass]	171
Figure 4.59 Found media photographs of South African heads of state, (nd), [digital images]...	171
Figure 4.60 Stewart, M., Paint-on-glass stills from Banishment scene, Big Man, (2013), [gauche and glycerine on glass]	172
Figure 4.61 Bacon, F., (1964), Three Studies for George Dyer, [Online], Available: < http://www.artmarketmonitor.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Francis-Bacon-Three-Studies-for-Portrait-of-George-Dyer-on-light-ground-15-20m-GBP.jpg >, (Accessed 7. 06. 2015)	172
Figure 4.62 Stills from footage of Groote Schuur Estate showing the abandoned lion's den and the surrounding landscape, (2009), [digital still, personal footage]	174
Figure 4.63 Stills from footage of Groote Schuur Estate showing the Rhodes Memorial, (2009), [digital still, personal footage].....	175
Figure 4.64 Stewart, M., (2014), Still from Big Man of the map that shows his journey from the house at Groote Schuur to Devil's Peak, [gauche and glycerine on glass]	176
Figure 4.65 Stewart, M., (2014), Still from Big Man showing the paint-on-glass figures of BJ Vorster composited onto stills from the live footage, [gauche and glycerine on glass, digital manipulated imagery].....	177
Figure 5.1 An example of pixel-based (A) and vector-based (B) graphics, (2014), [digital images], [Online], Available: < http://ts4.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608017938932826729&w=153&h=114&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7 >; < http://ts1.mm.bing.net/th?&id=HN.608018548811827397&w=300&h=30 >,, (Accessed 11. 06. 2015)	180
Figure 5.2 Folman, A., (2008), Still from Waltz with Bashir, [digital image], [Online], Available: < http://ts3.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608027916145790908&w=239&h=133&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7 >, (Accessed 18. 06. 2013).....	181
Figure 5.3 Hoogerbrugge, H., Still showing interactive interface of Modern Living/Neurotica Series, (1999-1995), [digital image], [Online], Available: < http://ts3.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608051645836756183&w=235&h=132&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7 >, (Accessed 18. 06. 2013).....	182
Figure 5.4 Stewart, M., (2014), Opening screen showing frame-by-frame Flash animation of BJ Vorster, [hand-drawn animation]	187
Figure 5.5 Stewart, M., (2014), Screen introducing BJ Vorster as Nebuchadnezzar (and Dr Beyers Naudé as Daniel) at the entrance to Groote Schuur, [hand-drawn animation]	188
Figure 5.6 Stewart, M., (2012), Screen capture showing the timeline and the layers of the Flash interface, [digital still].....	189
Figure 5.7 Stills from various archival sources showing different angles of BJ Vorster's head, [digital images]	190
Figure 5.8 Stewart, M., (2012), Manipulated digital drawing of the entrance showing the house at Groote Schuur, [manipulated digital drawing]	190
Figure 5.9 Archival stills used to compose the digital image in Figure 5.8, (2013), [digital images]	191
Figure 5.10 Stewart, M., (2012), Screen capture showing the process of animating on layers, [digital image]	192

Figure 5.11 Stewart, M., (2012), Screen capture showing the animation layer of the coat, [hand-drawn animation]	193
Figure 5.12 Stewart, M., (2012), Stills from frame-by-frame sequence from Banishment, [hand-drawn animation]	194
Figure 5.13 Stewart, M., (2012), Stills showing a metamorphosis from human to baboon and simultaneously the move from digital puppet animation to frame-by-frame animation, [hand-drawn animation]	195
Figure 5.14 Stewart, M., (2012), Still from Big Man showing leaves that were created using frame-by-frame animation in Flash, [hand-drawn animation]	196
Figure 5.15 Stewart, M., (2012), Screen capture illustrating the tweened sections in Flash, [digital image]	197
Figure 5.16 Stewart, M., (2012), Screen capture showing (via the onion skin layers) the frame-by-frame drawings of the leaves in the animation window and how they appear on the timeline, [digital image]	197
Figure 5.17 Stewart, M., (2012), BJ Vorster awakes in The dream of the statue (Big Man), [hand-drawn, digital animation]	199
Figure 5.18 Stewart, M., (2012), Chess scene in Banishment (Big Man), [hand-drawn, digital animation]	200
Figure 5.19 Stewart, M., (2012), Chess scene in Banishment (Big Man), [hand-drawn, digital animation]	200
Figure 5.20 Stewart, M., (2012), Over the shoulder shot in The dream of the tree (Big Man), [digital drawing]	201
Figure 5.21 Stewart, M., (2012), Chess scene in Banishment (Big Man), [hand-drawn, digital animation]	201
Figure 5.22 Stewart, M., (2012), Chess scene in Banishment (Big Man), [hand-drawn, digital animation]	202
Figure 5.23 Stewart, M., (2015), Dr Beyers Naudé as Daniel: The dream of the statue (Big Man), [digital drawing]	203
Figure 5.24 Stewart, M., (2015), Dr Beyers Naudé as Daniel: The dream of the tree (Big Man), [hand-drawn, digital animation]	203
Figure 5.25 Stewart, M., (2014), Screen capture demonstrating 'symbol objects' linked with the 'bone' tool, [digital image]	205
Figure 5.26 Stewart, M., (2014), Screen capture showing bone tool articulations on a single object drawing, [digital image]	206
Figure 5.27 Stewart, M., (2014), Screen capture illustrating complex shapes, [digital image]....	207
Figure 5.28 Stewart, M., (2012), Screen capture showing 'on the spot' walk cycle, [digital image]	209
Figure 5.29 Stewart, M., (2014), Screen capture showing the articulated right leg of the digital puppet of BJ Vorster, [digital image]	209
Figure 5.30 Stewart, M., (2014), Screen capture showing digital puppet of BJ Vorster: The limbs were created with 'shape objects' with the hands, feet and head were tweened 'symbols', [digital image]	210
Figure 5.31 Stewart, M., (2012 – 2013), Stills showing the visual similarities between the Flash generated and paper cut out images of BJ Vorster, [paper cut-out, pen and ink and digital drawing]	211

Figure 5.32 Stewart, M., (2014), Screen capture showing digital puppet, Chacma baboon, [digital image].....	212
Figure 5.33 Stewart, M., (2013), Stills from the Banishment scene (Big Man) - showing silhouetted digital puppets of BJ Vorster, (2013), [digital animation].....	213
Figure 5.34 Reiniger, L., (1954), Snow-White and Rose-Red, [digital image], [Online], Available: < http://ts3.mm.bing.net/th?id=HN.608039121710022903&w=223&h=123&c=7&rs=1&pid=1.7 >, (Accessed 22. 08. 2013).....	215
Figure 5.35 Stewart, M., (2012), Digitally manipulated still with source photographs, Groote Schuur estate A, [digital imagery].....	216
Figure 5.36 Stewart, M., (2012), Digitally manipulated still with source photographs, the house Groote Schuur B, [digital imagery].....	216
Figure 5.37 Stewart, M., (2012), Digitally manipulated still with source photograph, Groote Schuur estate C, [digital imagery].....	217
Figure 5.38 Stewart, M., (2012), Digitally manipulated still with source photograph, the abandoned lions' den at Groote Schuur estate, [digital imagery]	217
Figure 5.39 Stewart, M., (2012), Digitally manipulated still (before and after compositing) with source photographs, [digital imagery].....	218
Figure 5.40 Stewart, M., (2012), Digital stills showing source image A, manipulated and composited image B, manipulated image C with figure and bust removed and Image D showing transition to silhouette animation, [digital imagery].....	220
Figure 5.41 Stewart, M., Stewart, P., (2009), Stills from original footage of BJ Vorster's broken bust outside the Police Museum in Pretoria, [digital still, personal footage].....	221
Figure 6.1 The removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes from the grounds of UCT, (April 9 2015), [digital photograph], [Online], Available: http://i.telegraph.co.uk/multimedia/archive/03261/rhodes-lead_3261770b.jpg , (Accessed 6. 09. 2015)	230
Figure 6.2 Bust of BJ Vorster (second from the front) in the Heritage Foundation storeroom at the Voortrekker Monument in Cape Town, (2015), [digital photograph], [Online], Available: < http://www.timeslive.co.za/incoming/2015/04/11/statue-graveyard.jpg/ALTERNATES/ >, (Accessed 6. 09. 2015).....	231

APPENDIX 1: NOTES ON SOUND

Although I assisted with directing and conceiving of the sound for the film, for the most part I commissioned the sound editing and sound design. This comprised sourcing, creating, designing, compiling and editing the audio clips to synchronise with, inform and enliven the visual narrative. The soundtrack is a composition made up of ambient sound, synchronised sound and multi-layered clips from various sources. The audio composition comprised of sound clips sourced online (from the public domain), recorded sound and clips sourced from archival audio tracks and archival footage. The archival footage was purchased from BBC Motion Gallery (an online source for archival BBC footage) and permission was granted to use the footage for research and creative educational purposes (Ms C. Campbell 2009, pers.comm, 16 September).

Speech was incorporated into the sound design in various ways. Synchronised speech can be seen in the animated excerpt from BJ Vorster's inauguration speech in the *Prologue* scene. This audio clip was sourced from archival footage of Vorster's inauguration speech (Motion Gallery 1966). Voices were recorded to denote the biblical narrative. Beyers Naudé was voiced by Karl Mouton, an Afrikaans speaker (the voice used here may be replaced in the near future for public viewing). The voice of God in the *Banishment* scene was Ayanda Mpungose, a Zulu speaker. Lastly, Peter Stewart narrates, in the third person, the biblical descriptions of BJ Vorster/Nebuchadnezzar's dreams and an excerpt from *The Book of Daniel* (5:33), describing Nebuchadnezzar's beastly form.

Speech within the soundtrack was also incorporated as found sound bites from archival audio footage and DVD documentaries. In the *Prologue*, the funeral scene is ironically set to an excerpt from a tribute speech for Dr HF Verwoerd from the English Service radio station of the SABC (SABC 1966). Steve Biko's voice is also heard as one of the layered clips within the soundtrack of the *Banishment* scene (Internet Archive 2015), as is Harold Macmillan's voice, in an excerpt from his famous 'Wind of change' speech (Macmillan 1960), and Beyers Naudé's voice, in an excerpt from the documentary film, *The Cry of Reason: Beyers Naudé: An Afrikaner Speaks out* (Bilheimer 1988). Dimitri Tsafendas (who assassinated Dr HF Verwoerd) is also heard in this scene, singing a phrase from an old

Afrikaans folk song “Sarie Marais”¹⁹. This was sourced from a documentary about Tsafendas by Liza Keys titled *A question of madness: The Furious* (2001). In the *Epilogue*, sound bites of the voices of the former and present South African heads of state were sourced online from various YouTubeaudio sources.

The soundtrack incorporated musical composition that explores various themes from *The Book of Daniel*, notably an aria from Benjamin Britten’s “Nebuchadnezzar, the Burning Fiery Furnace”, the second of three “Parables for Church Performances” (with a libretto by William Plomer) (Britten-Pears Foundation 2015). This refers to the episode in *The Book of Daniel* where King Nebuchadnezzar builds a golden idol and demands that his subjects worship it. When the Israelites Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed’neg refuse to do so (in loyalty to the God of the Israelites) they are thrown into a fiery furnace but miraculously are unharmed (Daniel 3:1–30). Audio clips from George Frideric Handel’s oratorio “Balshazzar” from “Act One: Behold the Monstrous Human Beast” with a libretto written by Charles Jennens (Dean 1959: 435) were used in the *Banishment* scene. The oratorio explores the story of Nebuchadnezzar’s corrupt son, Belshazzar, who commits sacrilege against the God of Daniel, after which the hand of God inscribes a warning on the palace wall foretelling of Belshazzar’s downfall (K&K Verlagsanstalt 2015). While these compositions do not directly refer to the biblical episodes explored in the film, they do refer to Nebuchadnezzar’s story and his legacy. A counterpoint to these three musical compositions are extracts from dramatist Bertolt Brecht’s and composer Kurt Weill’s *The Three penny Opera* (1928), in particular the song from the finale from Act 2, “What keeps mankind alive”. These extracts (from a 1995 English adaptation) include musical sound bites from the song as well as the lyrics “We have to eat the shit, without revulsion” (The Music of Kurt Weill: September Songs 1995).

The audio clips used are very short sound bites and thus in terms of the U.S. copyright doctrine their inclusion can be considered fair use, since reproducing short excerpts of original works generally constitutes fair use. Section 107 of the U.S. Copyright Act states that “the reproduction of a particular work may be considered fair, such as criticism,

¹⁹‘Sarie Marais’ is a traditional Afrikaans folk song, possibly originating during the First Anglo-Boer War (c. 1880). The tune is believed to be taken from a song dating from the American Civil War called ‘Ellie Rhee’. The Afrikaans version of the song evolved over the years from its original Voortrekker version. Tsafendas’s rendition is from the modern conception of the song. He sings the chorus: ‘*O bring my t’rug na die ou Transvaal, Daar waar my Sarie woon. Daar onder in die mielies, By die groen doringboom, Daar woon my Sarie Marais*’(‘Oh take me back to the old Transvaal, the place where my Sarie lives, there below by the mealies, by the green thorn tree, there lives my Sarie Marais’)(KwaZulu-Natal Heritage 2015).

comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research” (U.S. Copyright Office 2015).