(The Necessity of) Reflexive Labour Practices at Triggerfish Animation Studios:

An Ethnography

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Abstract

This ethnographic dissertation argues for reflexive labour practices at Triggerfish Animation Studios in Cape Town, South Africa. Affect is used both as an analytical lens to examine the various social labour processes at Triggerfish, as well as a vitalising medium in reflexivity, which is a form of affect itself. Research was conducted over two months at Triggerfish during January and February 2018, where participant observation was practiced to collect data, along with focus groups and visual diaries collated from participants. The analysis centres on engaging the affective dimension of labour, as well as the ways that affect animates the different relationships that the studio embodies. Employees and management engage with each other through the affective notion of 'care', and this sustains relationships within a neoliberal labour environment. This sets the context of an affective workplace whose care-economy is carefully balanced and regulated through 'caring about' and 'caring for', which has the potential to hide power dynamics, as well as gendered labour expectations. Triggerfish's claims of difference, as well as making a difference, allows them to sell the idea of 'Africa' through identity claimed as well as identity distanced from. Recognising Triggerfish as a white, historically settler colonial company with an elitist history in a still-segregated society is important, even as the company is also located geographically in the Global South. There is thus the need for reflexivity within the geopolitical relationships involved in creating and selling media. Self-awareness is folded in on itself as an affective medium for understanding the ways that individuals conceptualise service work provided for the Global North, as well as service work provided by the Global North for Triggerfish. This uncovers and allows multiple, sometimes oxymoronic definitions and lived experiences to coexist. I argue that reflexivity at Triggerfish should be encouraged just as it is in Social Anthropology as a discipline. It allows for a multi-dimensional studio that is aware of its history and context, and can therefore make better-informed business decisions and produce better content.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation is the culmination of many, many different people's work, support and guidance, and it is only fitting to thank them for their contributions.

Thank you firstly to Triggerfish's partners Stuart and Mike for being so open and welcoming to a student of a "soft science" like anthropology that is often not understood. I really appreciated the freedom to write about what I found interesting, and their support through study leave, access to artists, participation in the focus groups, as well as being open to answering any and all questions, no matter how peculiar or vague. I know that the results of the research may be somewhat surprising, I really hope that I can contribute to your thinking about the studio in a different and useful way.

Thanks also goes to all the employees at Triggerfish during my fieldwork, especially those who participated in my research in any way. An anthropologist is useless without a field to study and participants to learn from, and so it really is that without any participation from the people around me at Trigger, this dissertation would certainly have not seen the light of day. People often went above and beyond, giving their time so generously even though we were getting through a full working day in the process. Thanks to all those who participated in the focus groups giving up their lunch times to do so, and thanks especially to J, K, P and S who made beautiful visual diaries. I am only sorry that I couldn't display more of your hard work and art as part of the finished product.

Although my official fieldwork lasted two short months, I spent two and a half years at Triggerfish working alongside talented individuals who have grown to be more than participants or colleagues, but dear friends who have supported and encouraged me personally as well. Your belief in my ability to hold a professional as well as academic space all in one has helped me to see this to completion. Thank you for many cups of tea and willingness to listen. You all know who you are.

Outside of the Triggerfish bubble, a wonderful supervisor has given me the space to grow, taken things as they came, and has had nothing but gentle encouragement and genuine

excitement for the work that I've done. I am so grateful for your wonderful guidance, and thank you for your seemingly endless patience, Kharnita. I have always been buoyed and renewed by my visits to your office, and definitely would not have been able to see this lengthy project to completion without you. A wider thank you to the Anthropology department at UCT is also necessary: one of the most comfortable places on campus, with people who genuinely concern themselves with one's welfare and progress. Thank you to anyone who has lectured me at any time (I am able to do this because of your effort), and thank you to Chris and Selma for the work that they have done behind the scenes.

Last (but not least), thank you to my personal tribe for being behind me every step of the difficult journey. Lynn, for being so integral to the solid foundation laid throughout the past three years, Mom and Dad for sticking by me no matter what, and the rest of my family for not asking *too* many times when I'd be finished with this. Thank you to friends far and near for always believing in me: you've seen the worst as well as the best, your pride and love means more than you'll ever know.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

2D - two-dimensional

3D - three-dimensional

AA - Animate Africa

BBC - British Broadcasting Corporation

BEE - Black Economic Empowerment

CG(I) - Computer-Generated (Imagery)

DTI - Department of Trade and Industry

MBA - Master of Business Administration

MIPCOM - Marché International des Programmes de Communication

MKT4 - *Mama K's Team Four*

MLP - Magic Light Pictures

NASA - National Aeronautics and Space Administration

PC - Personal Computer

SA - South Africa

UK - United Kingdom

US - United States (of America)

VR - Virtual Reality

Chapter 1: Introduction

This ethnographic dissertation is about animation on the African continent, and the ways animation is thought about: as a production process, a tangible product, and a concept. Specifically I look at animation at a Cape Town studio called Triggerfish, where I have spent the past three years working as a producer on three different BBC One Christmas Specials, and at the time of writing, a feature film. In the chapters that follow, I explore the ways affect is used as a vitalising force within the studio, whether it is the working environment, the products that are created, or the international relationships that the studio has with its various markets. My main aim with this research has been to reveal the inner-workings of an industry that has not been examined in this way at close quarters, and emphasise the need for reflexivity within the field of animation. I aim to help those within the animation and media industries in general to examine how they work, and the thinking put into the products that are created.

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One would be forgiven for thinking that the GPS had made an error if you had to travel to Triggerfish for the first time. Driving through historically white middle-class suburbia in Cape Town, South Africa, it was strange to think a farm existed at the bottom of Dreyersdal Farm Road (the obvious road name being the only clue), let alone a whole *animation studio* on that farm. But sure enough, the road becomes dirt instead of tar, if you're lucky you'll see some cows in one of the fields, and as you follow the driveway it reveals a dutch-style, thatched house with the logo "triggerfish" above the main double doors. 'The Long House', as it is called, was originally the coach house for an old Cape farm, and about 100 metres from The Long House is 'The Barn', another building that in 2018 houses more of the studio - artist workstations, meeting rooms, and the production office.

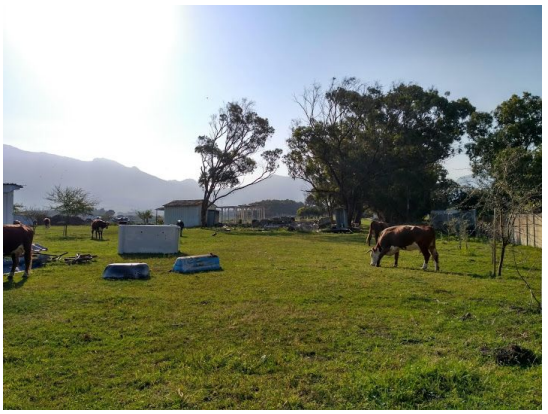


Photo A on the left shows my 'modern' desk with a PC, contrasted with Photo B on the right depicting some cows grazing. They were taken about 50 metres geographically apart.

The apparent oxymoron of a high-tech animation studio operating out of centuries-old Dutch-style buildings holds up at close-quarters: about 60 young artists lounge on the lawn during lunch breaks in summer, take walks around the vlei, or skateboard through the neighbourhood for fun, and then Skype Los Angeles in the afternoons for question and answer sessions with one of the directors. Complex software development, creative talent, and a production process all work together for over a year to produce about 25 minutes of high quality, computer generated (CG) animation that is screened to over 7 million people in the UK on Christmas Day.

I introduce Triggerfish in this way not only as a physical setting of the research that I performed, but also because so much of what I write about looks like a paradox at first examination. The co-existence of the abstract and the concrete, neoliberalism and care, the global within the local and the local within the global, associating with and simultaneously distancing from the concept of *Africa* while being *in* Africa- all are documented in this ethnography. In my limited and relatively short experience of the world, I have learned that very little is absolute, even though people often try their best to make things appear that way. Rather the world operates with far more complexity and nuance, often with the irony of assumed opposites working closely together in ways that only make sense from the inside looking out. This ethnography tries to make sense of the complex lived experiences that occur every day when working at an animation studio in Cape Town, South Africa called 'Triggerfish Animation Studios'.

Since conducting my fieldwork three years ago I have worked on several different productions at Triggerfish, worked briefly at another studio in Cape Town, and now work at an animation studio in Copenhagen, Denmark. My career started at the same time as my fieldwork, and my views on my research as well as the work that I do have shifted over time as growth contributes new insights. I was employed as a coordinator at Triggerfish at the beginning of 2018 on a short animation called *Zog*, produced for the BBC's Christmas Day animation special. I conducted active fieldwork for 2 months while working full time in my role assisting production, comparing my job to 'a receptionist on steroids' in my field notes at the time. Working from 8am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday, I collected data through participant observation, running focus groups during lunch, having four participants create visual diaries, as well as informal and formal interviews. The main epistemological lens I have used in the analysis of my data is that of affect: an attempt to document the fleeting nature of experience, accounting for both the real and the abstract as things change over time. Affect is also able to build relationships and socialities in such a way that allows for the complexities in time and space to exist without being collapsed.

In the chapters that follow I build an argument towards the necessity of reflexivity in producing animation, especially when using the marketing identity of 'African'. Chapter Two gives a contextual understanding of the history of animation in general, as well as the specific history of Triggerfish Animation Studios. My methodology follows in Chapter Three, outlining the ways in which data was collected, but also the particular ethical considerations of the study. Anonymity was not something that I could guarantee my informants, and I was also intrinsically entangled in the data that I was collecting: I continued to work at Triggerfish long after the official data collection period ended. Emphasising reflexivity and placing myself within the field of study is important not only to the overall argument of my thesis, but in negotiating the stickiness of living within the field as well.

After understanding the way that I collected data, I then go on to note the theoretical frameworks that I approach the data with. I have already mentioned that affect has been the main driving theoretical force throughout data analysis, and in the fourth chapter I explore different authors' understanding of the epistemological lens and how this might apply to the

work that I have carried out. The two sides of the reality / abstract coin existing simultaneously and more importantly *the awareness of this existence* is tantamount to understanding my argument for increased reflexivity and self-knowledge when producing animation. The theory of affect applies to different contexts within my research, and so I also discuss 'care' as a concept for understanding the day-to-day lived experience of Triggerfish employees, and neoliberalism in understanding the context of the company within a 'western' market.

The rest of the dissertation is divided into three "thematic" chapters, where I define different parts of the whole picture that is Triggerfish with its employees, functioning and creating in a particular global context. I focus first on "Triggerfish with its employees", outlining a particular care economy that the company has created as a way of sustaining and maintaining a workforce over time despite the close ties to precarious employment, reflecting the neoliberal market of western media. "Changing the studio culture" is a mantra adopted by one of the directors which, while positive in its context, responsibilitises employees in specific ways, shifting the onus of satisfaction in the workplace from the company to the workers (Hilgers, 2011). Affect functions here on multiple levels: through care as affective labour, and through shifting experiences of what it means to be an employee of Triggerfish. Becoming aware of the care economy is an act of affect as well through reflexivity.

The 'functioning and creating' that Triggerfish and its employees do is expanded through the examination of Triggerfish's use of 'Africa', and 'African animation' as a marketing concept. The company claims a tagline of "Bringing African Stories to the World", but opinions differed in the focus groups when I asked the question "What is African animation?". The way the company uses the term 'Africa' (as there is no real consensus internally as to what the definition of 'African animation' is) is as a marketing tool, and I show that even with the best intentions, Triggerfish both associates themselves with and distances themselves from 'Africa'. They claim to be 'African', or what Stuart[2] the CEO terms as a 'value proposition', but at the same time want to elevate artists' voices and help 'give opportunities' to 'Africans'

[2] I have been given permission to use prominent names at the company, and this would have been impossible to disguise considering the unique nature of the work that Triggerfish does. I still try to not link any names to this document directly by using first names only. I discuss this further in my ethical considerations in chapter three.

that, in the eyes of the company, otherwise wouldn't be able to create content on the world stage. I argue that the company needs to be more deliberate in the way that it uses 'Africa' as a marketing tool without alienating itself from the continent at the same time.

Finally, there is the global context that Triggerfish finds itself in - who are we marketing 'Africa' to? And where is the power in terms of the content that is created - who is allowed to imagine freely? I use Anna Tsing's idea of friction (2006) to illustrate the ways that the Global and Local collide with each other, as well as seemingly clear cut ideas of service work that defy the definitions applied to them at face value. Nuanced, complex definitions and relationships are uncovered through two service projects: *Zog*, produced in South Africa for the UK, and *Mama K's Team Four*, an 'African' show produced in Ireland.

I aim to argue in this dissertation that at all levels of experience - daily work, marketing a product, and in global relationships - things are more complex than they might originally be perceived, and it is only through careful examination of specific experience one can gain a better understanding of the way that a company like Triggerfish operates. Animation as a particular medium allows imagination and story to reach, now more than ever, global audiences from diverse backgrounds. The collapse of the distance between producer and audience is happening more and more in different ways rather than just "American distribution to the world", and it is through careful analysis and reflection of self that one is able to negotiate these dynamics, understand the product on a deeper level, and advocate for a healthier workforce.

Structure and Organisation of Thesis

This dissertation argues for the necessity of reflexive labour practices at Triggerfish, through documenting and understanding of affective social processes that circulate in/at the studio. I focus particularly on the idea of 'care' as a way of sustaining relationships within a neoliberal workforce, ideas of how the studio associates and disassociates from being 'African', and how 'self-awareness' at the studio would allow a multiplicity of lived experiences to coexist.

The chapter that follows provides a definition of animation, as well as a historical context both globally and specifically of Triggerfish as a company. Chapter Three outlines the

methodology of my fieldwork, and the ethical considerations taken. Chapter Four explores my research epistemology, the themes that appear in the chapters to come, and a small literature review to give context to the landscape of media production in Africa. Chapter Five describes everyday working conditions at Triggerfish, and the care economy that is created to sustain the relationships within a neoliberal workplace. Chapter Six expands on the ways that being 'African' is a part of the way that Triggerfish brands itself, through 'being different' as well as 'making a difference'. Chapter Seven looks at the larger picture of a global relationship between Triggerfish and the market that it wants to engage in, documenting multiple lived realities through service work for the UK as well as service work provided for Triggerfish by Ireland. I conclude in Chapter Eight with a summary of my argument, as well as practical suggestions for Triggerfish to consider deconstructive reflexivity[3] as a valuable affective tool to make better business decisions, and possibilities for future research on the subject.

[3] As referred to by Douglas Foley in his article *Critical Ethnography: The Reflexive Turn* (2002). Deconstructive reflexivity allows reality to be evoked rather than documented, with the acknowledgement of existing paradoxes and the gap between reality and text.

Chapter 2: A Historical Context of Animation and Triggerfish

Introduction

Animation is not widely studied or enthused about in the anthropology circles that I frequent. Both within academic circles and beyond them, relatively few people know that there is a steadily growing South African animation industry that produces work for both local and international audiences, although extensive marketing and media engagement is starting to change that. This burgeoning industry has been documented mostly through the University of the Witwatersrand Master's and Doctoral theses in Digital Art[4], ranging from a critical analysis of production pipelines, analysing South African and international content, and more technical theses on generating 3D images using computing software. At the time of writing, not much work was published through journals in South Africa about the animation industry, and knowledge is heavily reliant on writing from the Global North. From my research, I have only found the work of Paula Callus, an Associate Professor in Computer Animation at the University of Bournemouth in the United Kingdom. Having written her MA dissertation in the discipline of Anthropology of Media, and then having focused almost exclusively on African animation since, Callus applies and advocates for the application of anthropological theory within the academic genre of animation studies (2012).

I outline my research contextually, including the definition of what animation is, the history of animation both globally and in South Africa, and then a historical context of Triggerfish as a company.

Defining Animation

Animation, like many other concepts, defies a clear-cut definition. In his chapter *What is Animation and Who Needs to Know: An Essay on Definitions* in *A Reader in Animation Studies*, Philip Denslow (1997) argues that the definition of animation requires constant reworking due to the fluid, evolving technologies of the industry as well as the difference of opinion amongst scholars, teachers, and filmmakers. The Webster Dictionary definition quoted by Denslow is:

[4] Very few examples come from elsewhere, namely the Vaal University of Technology, and the University of Cape Town.

> "A: a motion picture made by photographing successive positions of inanimate objects (as puppets or mechanical parts), b: Animated Cartoon, a motion picture made from a series of drawings simulating motion by means of slight progressive changes" (1997: 1 - 2).

But he argues that this is a limited understanding of what the medium can truly offer. The diversity of animation forms and styles today is astounding, and has developed alongside the technology that supports the creation of new forms of animation. Virtual Reality (VR) is one of the newest developments in media technology in the past ten years that has allowed animation to enter the VR space as well.

History of Animation

Animation as a series of images intended to be viewed sequentially has been around for thousands of years: the oldest known record is of a five-thousand-year-old pottery bowl found in Iran depicting a goat eating leaves from a tree (Ball, 2008). Shanaz Shapurjee has done the laborious but important task of sketching a history of global animation, the history of animation and film in southern Africa, and how the two interlink in her 2008 MA dissertation entitled *A Historical Enquiry into the Animation Unit, Situated within the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) 1976 - 1988*.[5]

According to Shapurjee, as an art form animation spans "four primary [overlapping] epochs: the pre-cinematic, cinematic, the televisual and, most recently, the digital" (2008:11). The scientific documentation of Peter Mark Roget that the human eye retains images for a fraction of a second before being replaced by the succeeding image in 1824 is the scientific basis of the modern form of animation and indeed, film. His scientific explorations of manipulating vision in this fashion and the resulting 'toys' that were independently developed by John A. Paris, Joseph Plateau and Simon Stampfer over the following years naturalised the concept of moving images and the illusion of movement in the mind of the public – these

[5] For an in-depth history please refer to her work, as I will not be able to refer to everything in such great detail here.

‘toys’ were imported into South Africa during 1895 and beyond, preparing the South African public for the cinema.

These ‘toys’ like the Praxinoscope, Kinematoscope and the Zoetrope developed into rudimentary projections onto screens with examples like ‘Theatre Optique’ by Emile Reynaud and James Stuart Blackton, and the ‘Chalk Talks’ which were ‘trick films’ (manipulating chalk drawings similar to stop-motion). Other early developers were Winsor McCay who experimented with innovative camera angles and emotive character animation, and George Pal who worked with puppets on screen in a way that manipulated objects with invisible strings, causing them to look like they were animated. There is no outright correlation between Pal and South African television, but early on the SABC developed shows with live-action puppets as it was faster to create than twenty four minute animated shows. Frenchman Emile Cohl is another influential figure in the early stages of animation as inspired by Blackton’s work; he created over 250 animated films between 1908 and 1921, influencing European animation techniques. He is attributed with correlating the comic strip and the ‘animated cartoon’, after creating *The Newlyweds* in 1913, based on a newspaper cartoon strip.

Soon after the innovators of the cinematic era, businessmen recognised the profit-making potential of the industry. The Bray brothers were one of the first to industrialise the process by saving labour time, and drawing the scenery on celluloid to be applied over drawings of animation. The earliest animated film in South Africa was produced in 1915 by African Film Productions and was a comedic short entitled *Artist’s Dream / the Artist’s Inspiration,* which was similar to Blackton’s ‘Chalk Talks’. African Film Productions released four more animated shorts in 1917, from which only some still photographs exist today: *The Adventures of Ranger Focus*, *Don’t You Believe*, *Crooks and Christmas*, and *The Adventures of Ben Cockles*. The same studio, African Film Productions was renamed Killarney Film Studios during the 1940s, where artists worked with seemingly archaic forms of technology for the time, in both special effects for live films as well as weekly programming. They were known for their high quality despite the lack of “modern” technology, and the studio required improvisation and ingenuity from its artists to fulfil clients’ briefs. Twentieth Century Fox bought them out in 1955. The other major animation studio in South Africa in the 1940s was

Alpha Film Studio, owned by Bill Boxer of Empire Films. In 1947 he persuaded Denis Purchase, an English animator, to relocate to South Africa, and Purchase churned out most of the traditional cell animation at the studio. Even though they too had huge technological difficulties and were majorly understaffed, at their height they produced an amazing sixty seconds of cartoon animation per week as well as many 'drawtoons', both of which were for advertisements and shorts to be shown before feature films.

These early forms of animation in South Africa were modelled from the European and American forms of animation production at the time. Even with their lack of animation equipment, studios would make do with what they had, and in one case an artist communicated with a manufacturer of animation stands[6] for two years before getting them to innovate an entirely new kind of stand for the South African animation industry.

In America during the '40s and '50s, animation was on the up and up, the "golden era" in full swing. The large majority of literature on animation focuses on Walt Disney: both the man, and the giant animation company that has diversified and capitalised on its films through theme parks, merchandise, live action films, and later bought out other major film companies including Pixar and Lucas Arts. Disney's studio was formally founded in 1928, and together with his animators Disney formalised 2D animation into the art that we know it as today, 'perfecting' the art of storytelling. These forms including flattened colour, illusionary backgrounds, and fluidity of character in motion (including the twelve principles of animation [7]) were adopted by South African artists in the 1940s and 50s. British and American artists continued to emigrate to South Africa and unofficially train those who were born in South Africa, creating astounding amounts of commercials and film entertainment. The advent of television in the 1970s meant that more focus on children's programming started to occur, with mediums in marionettes (live-action puppets), 2D animation (hand drawn) and stop motion (photographed objects moved bit by bit).

[6] Special tables that allowed for the lighting and exact overlay of images drawn to compare frames simulating movement.

[7] Namely squash and stretch; anticipation; staging; straight ahead action and pose to pose; follow through and overlapping action; slow in and slow out; arcs; secondary action; timing; exaggeration; solid drawing; and appeal. These twelves principles or rules to follow as an animator is a guideline for acceptable aesthetics in a Western standard of animation, much like Classical music is founded on rules that were created by Bach stipulating what is acceptable aurally.

At the same time in America, computer generated imaging (CGI) was being developed at universities like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Kangong 2010). Not only for animation, CGI had implications in other industries like flight simulation, developing space simulations, and communications. The US government funded a lot of this research for its various NASA projects at the time. The UK and Europe did not have governmental financial backing to develop programs and research of their own, and Japan focused mostly on producing the hardware (physical computers) that ran US software (computer programmes). Computers were capable of both 2D (cell) animation and a new kind of three-dimensional animation where geometry was plotted using complex maths functions and these resulting objects could be manipulated and recorded on screen. Pixar was the first studio to produce a feature-length computer generated 3D film: *Toy Story*, in 1995. Kangong (2010) argues in his thesis that the continuation of Disney's principles of animation into Pixar's 3D world was instrumental in its success. Pixar has since been at the cutting edge of computer generated films, developing films and the new technology to improve their quality at the same time. They were bought by Disney in 2006, but still continue to produce films under their independent name.

A History of Triggerfish

In South Africa, Triggerfish as a company started in the stop-motion sphere of animation in 1997, producing children's and family content for the likes of Sesame Street in the US as well as local advertising agencies. It is currently located on Dreyersdal Farm, in the southern suburbs of Cape Town. The farm dates back to the 1790's, and was connected to Bergvliet Farm, a subdivision of Constantia, owned by Simon Van Der Stel, Dutch Governor of the Dutch Cape Colony (Picard, 1973). Triggerfish is housed in the original "Longhouse", "the Barn", and the newly refurbished "Shed" (see Photo C overleaf for an aerial photo of the offices). At the beginning of 2018 there were about 90 employees, all working across different projects along with a core admin and studio maintenance staff - this has since nearly doubled to more than 160 at the time of writing (January 2020)[8].

[8] I have since stopped working for Triggerfish and so do not know an accurate head count of the studio in 2021.

The studio organisationally has five partners: CEO Stuart, Head of Production Mike, Head of Development Anthony, COO and head of Ballisti[9] James, and CFO Jean Michel. A core team of permanently employed people includes studio management, a financial team, support staff, and a core team of permanently employed producers and artists. Teams enlarge with contract workers as needed - I have been one of these contract workers for the past two years. Currently[10] there are about five projects being actively worked on, with about 160 employees working at the studio. While the data collected was from a wide range of sources, in this dissertation I mainly draw from focus group recordings, my own experience and work during *Zog*, and one visual diary.

Photo C - The offices of Triggerfish on Dreyersdal Farm. Left arrow: the Shed, middle arrow: the Barn, right arrow: the Longhouse.

In 2007 the company decided to switch to CGI animation, and very soon after started developing their first feature film, *The Adventures of Zambezia*, which was released in 2012. *Khumba* followed soon after in 2013, and in 2015 the company started service work for Magic Light Pictures (MLP), a production company in London that had successfully

[9] The 'sister company' and gaming division of Triggerfish.
[10] February 2020

developed short films based on the writing of Julia Donaldson, one of Europe's top-selling children's authors, with *The Gruffalo* being one of the most well-known books by her. *Stickman* was commissioned by MLP for the BBC One Christmas Special on Christmas Day 2015, and the year after was *Revolting Rhymes*, also for Magic Light: a two part series of short films that had lots of production difficulties and huge amounts of stress associated with it, inheriting issues from the original production studio and three directors taking its toll on conflicting creative decisions. *Revolting Rhymes* was eventually nominated for an Oscar in January 2018 during fieldwork. We watched the live stream together at 3am in the morning at the studio, the excitement palpable despite the hour with snacks and a fake Oscar statuette (see Photo D below). The short however lost to another one called *Dear Basketball*. *The Highway Rat* was the next Julia Donaldson adaptation by the studio in 2017, which also suffered its fair share of production difficulties as *Revolting* had run far behind enough to eat into the development time of the next project. Artists would work until midnight on a regular basis to try and hit deadlines without compromising on the quality of the work.

Photo D - Triggerfish colleagues and family at 3am watching the 2018 Oscars

The Highway Rat was delivered successfully because of the extra work that was put in by artists. The subsequent film, *Zog* was the first project for a while to start with a solid footing, proper planning, and visual references from the previous films that didn't need to be

developed from scratch. The project also had different directors at the helm this time: Dan[11], co-director of *Stickman* who lived in Cape Town and therefore was able to be in the same physical space as the rest of the team, and Max, a director of the film-adaptation of *The Gruffalo* and *Room on the Broom*, German-born living in LA who would Skype in for two hours a day to provide feedback and hold creative meetings. I interned for a month on *The Highway Rat* before starting my master's coursework in 2017, and returned at the beginning of 2018 as a production coordinator on *Zog*. I worked at the company for over two and a half years, working on *The Snail and the Whale* in 2019, and then Triggerfish's third feature film *Seal Team* as a Departmental Production Manager until August 2020. I discuss my intricate connections with the company in the second chapter, where my work as a producer stops and my anthropological analysis starts, and how I refer to the company as 'we' to acknowledge that I am implicated in the social imaginaries I talk about, just as much as the next employee.

Something that the studio also emphasises is its 'corporate social investment', which has been a focus in the last decade through its Public Beneficiary Organisation, the 'Triggerfish Foundation'. Various programmes and projects have fallen under this umbrella: The Story Lab was a 2015 initiative / competition sponsored by Disney and the DTI, which aimed to develop and further African storytelling with original content ideas intended for TV and feature-length film. The company invested over a million rand in the venture, with over 1400 entries received, and several projects from that continent-wide search are now in various stages of pre-production.

Animate Africa (AA), a division of the Triggerfish Foundation, was also formed in the 2010s, aiming to "discover and develop genius African animators to diversify global entertainment". Their mission statement on their Facebook page reads:

> "Africa's animation industry is booming, held back only by capacity constraints. In a wildly creative continent of 1.2bn, capacity should not be an issue, but while talent is everywhere,

[11] Not a pseudonym because you can google *Stickman* or *Zog* and find out who I'm talking about anyway. I've noted in my ethics section that I haven't included any surnames so that people won't necessarily be traced back to my thesis, but I cannot stop people who read this thesis to look him up.

> opportunity is not. Animate Africa is a first step towards changing that." (Facebook, 2009).

AA has collaborated with different sponsors and networks to create opportunities for more public, specifically young people, in South Africa to be exposed to and learn more about animation as a viable career opportunity. They have hosted webinars, advocacy talks, a ten week drawing workshop for underprivileged high school students, seminars for Kenyan animators (in Kenya), and also have attended career expos. In 2018 the foundation launched the Triggerfish Academy, an online learning platform and registered training provider that aims to teach anyone with access to the internet the basics of animation - again sponsored by Disney, as well as the Goethe Institute (Triggerfish Academy, 2019). Triggerfish emphasises the need to uplift the community around themselves, with the idea that it will only strengthen the industry by inviting more talent and creativity to stay.

Conclusion

To summarise then, animation is a medium of moving pictures that has been documented over five thousand years. These pictures can take many forms, and in recent history most of the production of animated films is made with the aid of computers and digital technologies. While there is a non-western history of animation, the history of the US and UK dominates when it comes to developing animation technology. South Africa followed the animation developed overseas being trained by American and British animators, with a focus on puppets, 2D, and stop motion animation in the second half of the 20th century. Triggerfish was founded at the end of the century in 1997, starting with stop motion and transitioning to CG animation at the end of the next decade. They have produced two animated feature films, five half-hour Christmas specials for the BBC, and are now in production for their third feature film *Seal Team*. A particular history of long hours and crisis management has been emphasised in the company since 2016, and this influences the way that the company ran *Zog* in 2018. With this context in mind, the next chapter outlines my methodology while collecting data at Triggerfish, and the particular ethical context of being employed by your informants, as well as writing about such a distinctive business.

Chapter 3: Methodology & Ethical Considerations

Introduction

"Research design should be a reflexive process which operates throughout every stage of a project" (Hammersley 1995:24). It is in this spirit that I aim to outline my methodology of the research undertaken at Triggerfish. Three main methods of data collection are outlined below, as well as some of the theoretical viewpoints around methodology as well. The ethical considerations of my project follow, as I am so intrinsically interwoven into the field that I am studying. I explain that although this is not a classical auto-ethnographic work, there are aspects of autoethnography that need to be acknowledged, as well as the very important topic of not being able to fully anonymise my participants, and in what ways this alters the outcome of the research.

Methodology

I first heard of Triggerfish in 2013 when meeting one of their concept artists and animators. Although I have always been a keen animation fan (collecting the different films of Pixar and consuming animation throughout my teen years), I hadn't realised that there was an industry in Cape Town (where I grew up), or that it was a viable career choice for anyone outside of Hollywood. Incidentally, I started dating my then-partner who worked at Triggerfish in 2015, and since then have had an invested involvement in the company. I have made friends with artists there, attended end-of-year screenings, and learnt about the different parts of the CG pipeline. Encouraged by my ex to consider a management position in animation, I applied for a production coordinator position on *The Highway Rat* at the end of 2016. Whilst unsuccessful for the full-time position, I was invited to spend a month on the production as an intern before I started the coursework for my masters degree. I thoroughly enjoyed my time on the production and though too busy to contribute because I was still attending classes at university, I helped out during my holidays. When considering the topic for my dissertation it was an easy decision to conduct fieldwork at Triggerfish, and when applying for a full-time contract as a coordinator to begin in January 2018, I expressed to my employers that I would like to also conduct fieldwork for the first two months of my contract.

Stuart and Mike very kindly agreed, and I presented my proposal to them, the main research question being "How does engaging in service work for other continents promote 'African animation'?". While interested in my research they didn't suggest any topics themselves - my honours dissertation on barley farming in Caledon had been very different in that I was conducting research for an organisation that wanted to understand the impact of their work, and the freedom to explore what I found interesting during research this time around was greatly appreciated if not a little nerve-wracking that they would indeed find any kind of real value in the work that I was doing.

I started my first official job on January 2nd, 2018 as a production coordinator on the Christmas TV special called *Zog*. The main responsibilities of this role included making sure that artists in various teams had a structured time frame in which to complete work, as well as facilitate any meetings between directors and various heads of departments. There were two coordinators on the project including me, and together we implemented the day-to-day running of the production manager's overall schedule.

My main working hours were between 8am and 5.30pm Monday to Friday, although we often worked outside of these hours as well, sometimes staying late in the evenings to make sure that what was required by various teams was prepared for them timeously. The direct production team (responsible for the delivery of the project, of which I was a member) consisted of the following people:

- Two production coordinators (of which I, a white[12] female in my early twenties, was one). The other coordinator was replaced a little into January. The first one was a male in his late twenties who would have been racialised as 'coloured' in apartheid, and when his contract ended, Clare, a white female in her mid-twenties replaced him. *Zog*

[12] Race in South Africa has a long history of discrimination during colonisation and apartheid, spanning back at least three centuries. Apartheid in South Africa meant the governmentalised racial classification of people as 'African', 'Indian','coloured' and 'white', with the latter being the most 'racially pure' or 'superior'. The identification of 'black' on the other hand is a socio-political category created during the Black Consciousness movement in the 1970s, and was created with a sense of uniting those who were not classified as white (Owen, 2016). I therefore use the racial terms 'black' and 'white' in this dissertation to acknowledge the history of discrimintation and to make sure that I do not perpetuate any discrimination either.

was also her first production, having just finished college at The Animation School, a local animation training facility.

- Aninka was the production manager who supervised the day-to-day running of the project and detailed schedule planning. Self identifying as "mixed-race", she turned 30 in January of 2018.
- A white line producer named Kaya, in her late twenties. The line producer is responsible for the budget of the project, hiring of personnel, negotiating contracts, and is also responsible for the broad-based planning of the project.
- Mike, a white male in his forties and also a partner at Triggerfish was the co-producer on *Zog*, ultimately responsible for the successful delivery of the film to our clients, Magic Light Pictures.

Working in this team provided the entry point for my main form of data collection: participant observation. Being the cornerstone of any ethnographic endeavour, the *participant* part of 'participant observation' is paramount for any kind of real understanding of the inner-workings, and I was lucky enough to not only be included superfluously in the field that I wanted to study, but became a significant part of the process. Kathleen Dewalt, Billie Dewalt and Coral Wayland point out that although participant observation is accepted "almost universally as the central and defining method of research in cultural anthropology", authors do not often agree on the definition of what constitutes actual participant observation (1998:259). For them however, participant observation is a method within fieldwork which includes "the explicit use in behavioural analysis and recording of the information gained from participating and observing" (ibid). Production is a perfect vantage point for an anthropologist: instead of sitting at a desk for eight hours a day and working on the task that had been assigned to me (like an artist would), my job required me to liaise and interact with far more people, of all hierarchies and not necessarily only my own or below. As a coordinator, you're meant to be the eyes and ears of the production, preempting problems before they become catastrophic, and predicting the needs of artists, directors and producers before they are expressed. Thinking in such a large-scale way while still having concrete tasks and individual relationships is the perfect marriage with anthropology, and I suspect part of the reason why I love both animation producing as well as social anthropology, as strange a combination as it is.

In the first week of my arrival, although research access and permission was granted from a partner level, I wanted to make sure that my colleagues were aware of the other work that I was doing during the day, so as to make sure that there wasn't any concern of 'covert research'[13]. I sent an email to all staff explaining what fieldwork I was doing for January and February 2018, and asked them to please let me know if they did not want to feature in my research at all. I received one response from this email asking not to be included, and lots of questions during lunch about what exactly 'social anthropology' was.

David Jacobson, in his book *Reading Ethnography* (1991), writes that there are "modes of thought" and "modes of action" when analysing phenomena or conceptualising reality. Through participant observation I hoped to record "modes of action" - what the various actors in the field do in their daily lives - and then provide an explanation and analysis as to how informants act and interact with each other and the environment around them. Only recording "modes of action" however leads to a lop-sided argument based on only one form of data collection, and so in order to collect "modes of thought" as well, in the same explanation email about my research I invited the general workforce to focus groups run at lunchtime, as well as the opportunity to participate in keeping visual diaries. Affect serves as the suturing between this binaristic view of ethnography methodology. It is in between "thought" and "action" that affect lives, referred to as "modes of being" (Stewart 2017). Using this as an epistemological lens it bridges over the gap that might have existed.

As a methodology, the focus group is defined as "a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher" (Morgan 1997:6 as cited in de Vos et al 2011:361). I ran these on Wednesdays for about 45 minutes during the lunch hour in the middle of the day, and advertised them each Monday at the studio meeting. I never had the same group of people at focus groups, and managed to cover a wide range of topics as well as opinions with a core group of participants who came as many times as they could. Eight sessions were held in total, with topics ranging from "What is African Animation?" to testimonies about working in the industry, aspirations for what people wanted to achieve within their working life, and the way that people thought about art as a money-making

[13] Research done without the knowledge of participants, conducted secretly.

business. No participant attended all the focus group sessions, which gave them a sense of freedom to engage whenever they could, and different people throughout the company participating created different dynamics in the different groups. Some groups contained mainly interns; other groups had up to three partners of Triggerfish in one focus group which yielded very different observations from participants: interestingly interns were far more internally focused (attending sessions like "who am I, how did I get here and where am I going?") while partners and senior artists questioned more theoretical topics, like "what is African animation?". I tried to prepare loose topics beforehand to give people a sense of what would be discussed (I found this encouraged people to attend if they vaguely knew what they were in for) but the conversation flowed for the most part very naturally with me only setting up topics at the beginning of the session or making sure that all members of the group felt like they were contributing and participating actively if they wanted to. Various group members would attend to listen only, and they were welcome to do so - this invariably lead them to contributing a more active role in discussions at their second or third session that they attended, but on their own terms. Ethically I made sure that everyone knew I was recording the sessions at the beginning and let them know that at any point they could stop contributing, and even after the session was finished they could withdraw their participation should they choose to. Nobody explicitly told me that they would like to be anonymised but to make sure that I was ethical I have anonymised everyone who participated in the focus groups, and don't quote anyone directly.

Another invitational email was sent at the end of January for participants to create a visual diary for February, and four members of the company agreed to participate. I provided a small, A6, hardcover spiral plain-page book to each participant and an outline document that explained they could create whatever they wanted with the book that described various work experiences or thoughts throughout the month of February (see attached addendum H for the document I gave to participants with the diary at the end of the dissertation).

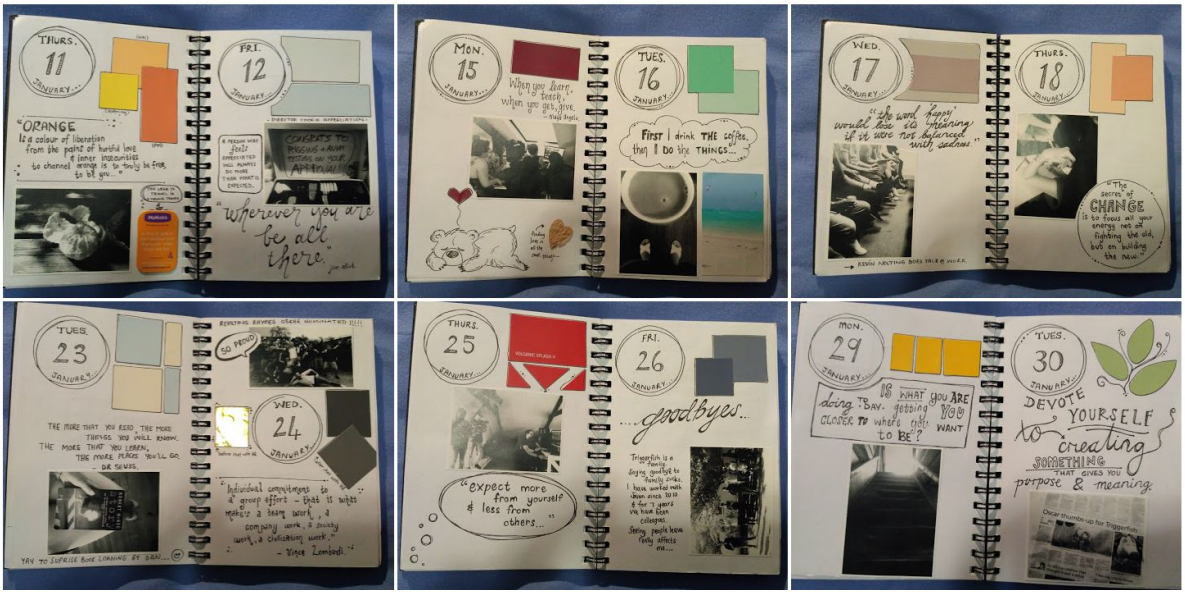
One of the oversights of this method was that I never thought to participate in the visual diary exercise: in my mind at the time this was something that "other people" were doing for me and my research, and it was only after the fact when presenting these beautiful works of art to my supervisor when she asked me "Did you do one too?" did I realise how one-dimensional

my thought process was. In a way this mirrors the divide between production and artist in the company - artists are producing work for production and the project, and we guide and supervise this process but at no point does it occur to us that we could perhaps actively participate in the process as well. In the subsequent months that I spent at the company the urge to create manifested in various ways in the production office (a producer creating her own children's TV show, another producer starting a craft club during lunches) and this shows that even though the production roles are separate from the artists', the individuals do not remain confined to them. The producer, like the anthropologist, has to actively cross over from the role of 'the observer' to that of 'the observed', and these strong distinctions between roles (while necessary in the workplace), allow avenues of rich data collection to go unexplored.

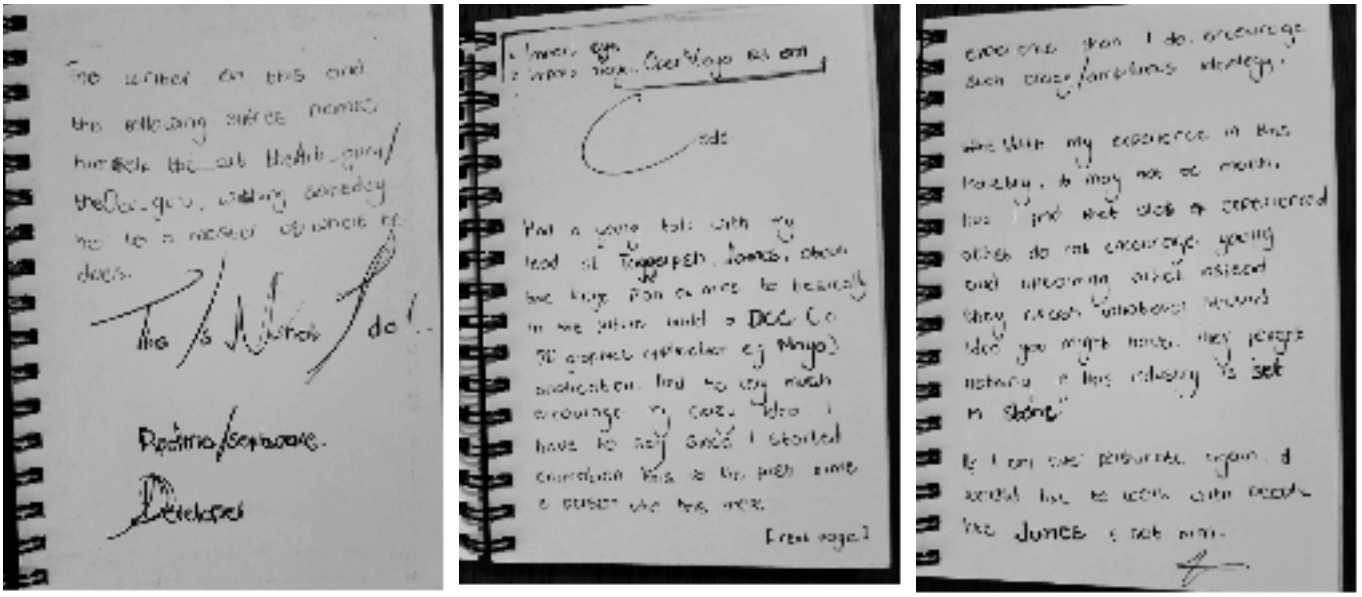
Two people who identified as male and two people who identified as female participated in the visual diary exercise for the entirety of February 2018. All four visual diaries when they came back to me were done in different ways:

- A classically drawn comic series of various observations, both written and drawn

- A “colour” diary with a specific colour per day that represents the day as a whole, as well as a quote of some kind with black and white photographs taken on the same day at work



- A written diary of observations with a few black and white sketches



- Cartoons, images and writing to describe various situations at work or things that the person was thinking about at the time, sometimes jokes

All of these diaries are deeply personal reflections of thoughts and emotions that were felt at a particular point in a particular day, and they are invaluable resources that are very difficult to properly "decode" or pull apart in any kind of dissecting sense. Informal interviews accompanied the diaries at their completion, although it was difficult to get participants to fully explain their work as they either thought that it explained itself, or I, as an insider, had a shared understanding of the overall meaning of the work and therefore didn't require an explanation. I am only sorry that I wasn't able to use more of this work, as a lot of work and effort went into each creation with often breathtaking results. A close visual analysis however is beyond the scope of this work, and the direction that my analysis took. It definitely provides future possibilities.

Sampling of data is only a natural part of ethnographic research: such rich description and dense writing can only use so much of the pages and pages of data that are created through extended periods of collection. Hammersley notes that there are "three major dimensions along which sampling within cases occurs: time, people and context" (1995:46). The time of research definitely has to be noted: two years ago at the time of writing, it is important to note that this is a small window of two months in one production, and can by no means represent an accurate view of the company today, or any other representation of Triggerfish that is outside this temporal context. The scope of this particular dissertation does not allow for a longer data collection period, and therefore this will just have to be noted as a limitation of the study which provides room for future improvement. People will also be 'sampled' in this ethnography through the relevance of statements of their thoughts and actions to my argument. Although I worked in a production of about sixty people, I am not able to include all of their experiences here, and only one of the four visual diaries are directly referenced in the chapters to come. Again, this allows for more work to be produced in the future. Context was also taken into account: an artist may behave very differently in their own home with their family than the way that they behave while at work, or even amongst their peers and friends at work compared to talking to the producer. My deep connection with the space has allowed the extractive nature of fieldwork to become tangible: there is an affective response even now, three years later that leaves a residue of experience.

Ethical Considerations and Reflexivity

Every effort has been made to consider ethics at every stage of research: throughout research design, implementation, fieldwork and analysis, and write-up afterwards, extending into the afterlife of my work and implications of it being available online for the general public to read. According to the University of Cape Town's Faculty of Humanities *Guide to Research Ethics*, the characteristics of my research encourage continuous deliberation over ethical challenges, as the research may evolve and move in 'unexpected directions' (2017:6). Efforts have been made to comply with the departmental and faculty requirements for ethics clearance, as well as the Anthropology Southern Africa ethical guidelines, some of which will be discussed below.

The primary responsibility of an anthropological researcher is to their research participants or informants. “Do No Harm” should be the mantra within the field, and the research should be able to protect and anticipate harm, although this is not always possible. Deborah Posel and Fiona Ross point out that we as anthropologists have to respond to our informants as human beings within the thick of fieldwork, and “latent tensions and ambiguities in the codes themselves” are often realised only as relationships and situations play out (2014:1). Thankfully there were no real tensions caused because of my research, with the “day to day” passing normally because of my role as a coordinator, endemic to the space and not necessarily imposing myself on anyone. This is discussed in more detail below.

Informed consent has been asked of all participants, in either a verbal or written form - whatever was deemed most appropriate in the moment. Consent needs to be constantly negotiated with all participants throughout the time of study and even after the fieldwork has ended. Participants have been informed as to the nature and purpose of the study, and their own concerns need to be accommodated as far as possible within the research method and products. Only one person responded negatively to the initial email that I sent out asking anyone to let me know should they not want to be involved in the research, and I have respected their wishes not to be involved. All participants have had the freedom to stop participating at any time during the project with no questions asked, and also have had the option of being anonymised to a certain extent. Nobody directly asked to be anonymised for my research, but I have used only first names to make sure that a person cannot be directly linked with this document should someone who *doesn’t* know Triggerfish read through.

Unfortunately (or fortunately I suppose for the company) Triggerfish is a very well-known South African studio which makes it impossible to conceal where the fieldwork took place - you just need to type “British South African animation” into Google to get the name of the company, so I wasn’t able to conceal the name. At the beginning of my research I considered creating composite characters to hide the identities of participants, but although there were about ninety artists working at Triggerfish during the time of my research, there was only one director or one art director on site, resulting in a recognisable description no matter how I tried to disguise them. Although these first names are only really recognisable to those within the industry (a very small part of the population of Cape Town), I considered the ways that I

was describing participants carefully, and what I was essentially "putting into their mouths" by quoting them. In group discussions I was more successful at hiding the identity of participants, but I cannot get away with anonymising Dan, the director for example, or Stuart, the CEO of the company. All data has been carefully considered therefore to make sure that I am not tarnishing their reputation in any way, and I can personally vouch for the character of each participant that is named.

In her 2012 keynote address published in *Anthropology Southern Africa*, Shannon Morreira notes that

> "We are no longer able to imagine fieldwork as something that occurs in places and spaces that are somehow removed from our daily lives" (2012:102).

This 'tendency to conduct anthropology at home' is true in every sense for me: my work-life is the largest amount of time that I dedicate to one particular activity, and I became intrinsically involved in the work of the studio, with my social life also connecting to the people that I work with. Considering this entanglement (or 'manglement', as Francis Nyamnjoh refers to it (2015)) I described the visual metaphor in my proposal to this work as being 'trapped in a ball of wool, the threads knotted and tangled around my body'. I went on to say that 'as an anthropologist I do not have the liberty of reaching for the nearest pair of scissors and divorcing myself from the mess I have made. Rather, I have to learn how to move with the baggage that I possess currently, in such a way that facilitates my ability to move and doesn't hinder the movement of others'. While it is important to keep in mind the threads and compensate my movements accordingly, I thought that one of the most practical ways I could remind myself and the reader of my entanglement is by referring to Triggerfish and its employees as "us", "we", and "our". My dissertation can, if read in the wrong way or outside of context, be considered "accusatory" towards the company as I push Triggerfish to consider ways of working and thinking that haven't necessarily been thought about before as any real contribution to the functioning of the studio. I definitely do not intend to paint Triggerfish in a bad light or write an "exposé ethnography" (Spiegel 2005), and one of these ways that I can

make sure I am implicated in the way that the company thinks as well as my own personal entanglement is by using first person plural pronouns.

Another way of diffusing the "accusation" is one that I have already been using in my writing: reification of the company itself, instead of constantly referring to one or a few people individually and noting descriptions as their own personal views. While reification can be seen as a bad thing (divorcing a concept or inanimate object from the forces that allow it to be, ala Marx's commodity fetishism (1977)), I instead want to use it consciously in this work as a way to emphasise the collective understanding of social imaginaries, and to not single out individuals. Interestingly there seems to be more flexibility and a perception of "ability to change" when discussing what a company's understandings are of specific themes or topics, while labelling of individuals makes them *always* that way, even though as anthropologists we acknowledge the non-stagnant and constant fluctuation of just about everything. Coupled with the understanding of contextual research (this only describes Triggerfish at one very specific point in history), I hope to make sure that people are protected from any unintentional harm.

'Studying down' is another concern that Morreira addresses in her article. She argues that because of the socioeconomic context of postcolonial sub-Saharan Africa 'and the daily presence of extreme inequalities and poverty in the cities in which researchers live and work', social science research in southern Africa continues to pay more attention to those who are marginalised and subjected to physical or structural violence (2012:101). She argues that Andrew Spiegel's 'ethics of exposé or care' emphasises this kind of research. I do not intend my research to be an exposé of the marginalised. I still see the value in an ethics that is

> "flexible and responsive to immediate demands, rather than [being] a mechanically operationalisable (liberal) ethics of universal justice and rights... that takes its direction from political concerns with issues only of public power and individual rights" (Spiegel, 2005:134).

And to quote the wonderings of Alice as she falls down the rabbit-hole, 'What if I should fall right through the centre of the earth... oh, and come out the other side, where people walk

upside down?' Which way is up, and which way is down in the first place? In some respects, my research is to be considered what Laura Nader refers to as 'studying up' (1972): I was working in a starting position in the company, and interviewing partners of Triggerfish who are all white men who are respected and known for their work throughout the African animation industry. In other respects however I may be considered to be studying a small animation studio situated outside of the regular bounds of the global industry. To quote Prof. Francis Nyamnjoh in a seminar, I am sending "greetings from the centre of the periphery" (2017). Far from confusing, instead this disorientation is the crux of my research: looking at global and local power dynamics that do not necessarily have to be studied up or down.

Being embroiled in the power dynamics between the Global North and South is par for the course, and complicity in any ethnography of media is something that also needs to be considered carefully. Especially when working with marginal or minority groups, anthropologists move over into 'activism anthropology' easily, but this brings its own set of dilemmas into the field as Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod and Larkin elaborate in their introduction to *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain* (2002), arguing that it is awkward to critique the 'subaltern' that is being advocated for. It is difficult to remain impartial when we as anthropologists are also producing an academic form of media at the end of the day, and can therefore relate very closely to the production of any form of media. Part and parcel of any production of media is what is able to be said, and what is unsayable. This depends on the scenario and the players involved, but always needs to be considered. Being censored is therefore not an 'if' scenario, but a 'how': how am I censored in this project, and how will I operate in a way that acknowledges this censorship but still produce meaningful and ethical research?

Censorship is embodied in many different ways in academic research (Williams, 2016): the fact that I am expected to produce an academic text to obtain a degree is just one of the conditions that shapes the text that I produce. Above all else, doing no harm to my participants should and does censor my work in ways that are perfectly legitimate and good to do. Part of my contract of employment contains a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) which makes it illegal for me to "disclose or make available to any third party any confidential and proprietary information of the employer or the employer's clients, save as may be required in

the ordinary course of the business". The contract also clarifies: "For the purposes of Clause 13.1 "proprietary information" means any information, which is stated to be confidential, or imparted and received in confidence, or, by its nature, intended to be kept confidential, including particulars of the employer's:

- Clients or suppliers and arrangements made with them
- Products
- Operating methods, financial arrangements and marketing strategies
- Cost prices, mark-ups and profit margins
- Trade secrets
- Proprietary computer software and related manuals"

It is public knowledge that Magic Light Pictures produced a BBC animated Christmas special for 2018, and that Triggerfish completed the production work – there is no additional information about clients or suppliers that I will have to disclose. The product is the actual film being produced: now that the project has been completed I am under no obligations to not share the work, while still intending to reference the source correctly. I have cleared all production information I disclose in my thesis with my senior management, profit margins were not disclosed to me anyway, and there are minimal trade secrets and locally produced computer software. The work that follows does not focus on procedure or workflow, and I have therefore complied with the agreements with my NDA to not disclose any proprietary knowledge. Rather this thesis is relationship-based and centres the human at the heart of the production process. I have been able to document the everyday experience of working at Triggerfish, how people *feel* about their work, the things that they make and the relationships that they form with their colleagues and friends. Looking wider than the studio I have also been able to document the relationships that the company itself has with the general society surrounding the studio, its employees, and its inter-continental business relationships.

The next chapter that follows outlines the main epistemological lens of my work, as well as a background to the themes discussed going forward. A small literature review is included to indicate the broader academic discourse surrounding the topic.

Chapter 4: Themes, Epistemological Lens, Literature Review

Introduction

Animation is not exempt from business requirements and being linked to a larger economy, just like any media production facility. Profits and shareholders[14] are considered as well as the artistic merit of the finished product, and in this way Triggerfish is linked to the western neoliberal market. Neoliberalism thus contextualises Triggerfish economically. Affect is used as an analytical tool throughout the thesis because of its surprising pervasiveness in a business context, as well as reflexivity being a form of affect in and of itself. Affect links to neoliberalism in interesting ways, as chapter four illustrates particularly with the theory of 'care'.

First, I present the epistemological lens that I analyse my work with: affect. The definition of affect is slippery, with the basic explanation I have constructed ("something in motion as well as being emotive with an influencing behaviour") not fully encompassing the ways affect is able to document lived experience without flattening or homogenising. I spend some time therefore going through different authors' perspectives, and then do important linking to the concept of reflexivity, and how these two are related.

In Chapter Five the affective concept of care is used to understand the way that Triggerfish's employees experience the company. Rooted in kinship studies, care is also defined as 'work' as well as a 'life-course', and in chapter 4 these definitions are expanded upon and I explain how they apply to the specific context of Triggerfish.

Triggerfish sits within a specific economic environment based in western neoliberalism. While neoliberalism as a concept has multiple meanings, all authors link their definitions to a form of radicalised capitalism, "based on deregulation and the restriction of state intervention" (Hilgers, 2011:352). I explore how neoliberalism is understood by anthropologists as a culture, a system, as well as a method of governmentality.

[14] Financial investors and clients who commission service work

Works looking at the animation industry, labour organisation, outsourcing, media studies, and intercontinental relationships are all briefly touched on, emphasising the most important ways that they fit into the work that I have done.

Affect and Reflexivity

I have found Affect most helpful in treading carefully around the forms of data but still managing to make out a shape of some kind and describing it as such. Authors like Kathleen Stewart (2015) and Sarah Ahmed (2004) have been valuable in trying to capture the enigma that is lived experience, as well as Brian Massumi (2002) Affect holds and honours the lived experience of each participant, as well as the anthropologist, emphasising relationship and the everyday.

A common mistake and one that I was taught to avoid at school is the speaker and writer of the English language's tendency to confuse "effect" and "affect". "Affect," I was taught to remember, "starts with an A, and therefore can be connected to action, to doing. Affect is therefore most commonly used as a verb, while 'effect' is most often used as a noun." One of these exceptions when using 'affect' as a noun is in psychology, where an 'affect' is defined as 'an emotion, feeling or desire associated with a certain stimulus' ("Affect, n.", 1994:20). Someone with a 'blunted affect' psychologically-speaking is someone who has very little emotional expression.

Affect therefore as a philosophical or epistemological lens follows these etymological hallmarks: something in motion (doing, acting), as well as being emotive with an influencing behaviour. "Affect arises in the midst of *in between-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon." (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010:1). In their essay collection *The Affect Theory Reader*, Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth argue that affect is best understood as a potential to both affect and be affected by others around us - both objects and subjects, all defined as "bodies". A theorist that they no doubt have drawn from is Sara Ahmed - she argues that affect is the shaping of bodies through social interaction: "Emotions work to shape the 'surfaces' of individual and collective bodies. Bodies take the shape of the very contact they have with objects and others" (2004:1). Gregg and Seigworth describe these contacts as "force-relations" (2010:2).

While Ahmed does describe the changing impressions of emotion on objects, and not necessarily studying their stasis, her opening chapter to her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* still seems to consider bodies as fully-real, their surfaces being shaped and moulded by the encounters around them but under all that still being a lasting *them*. The interactions superficial, and their innermost being not compromised. "Feelings do not reside in subjects or objects, but are produced as effects of circulation" (Ahmed 2004:8). The effects of circulation therefore are collective and create publics. But when looking at subjects, what then is "inside"? If your answer is cognition, Gregg and Seigworth also argue that "affect and cognition are never fully separable" (2010:2-3), and while Ahmed acknowledges that emotion as a psychological state is one way of viewing emotion, she discards this "inside-out" approach as well as a purely "outside-in", social view of affect (2004:9). Instead, Ahmed argues for bodies that are created through the interactions of emotion, bodies that are constantly in flux and defined by their circumstances. While this is not explicitly explained as both 'real' and 'virtual' at the same time, the constant changing of bodies depending on their contexts is an assumption of this duality.

Kathleen Stewart describes this similarly, but with more emphasis on affect as ethereal "emergent phenomena" (2015:221). And it is not enough to think of these phenomena, or experiences, as only imaginary. She writes about a road in her chapter *Precarity's Forms*:

> "It is not enough to say, vaguely, that the road is an imaginary – a logic of some sort abstracted to become a thing in itself. Rather it is a thing simultaneously, coterminously real and virtual, abstract and concrete..." (2015:225)

What Ahmed (2004) as well as Gregg and Seigworth (2010) fail to put forward explicitly right at the beginning of their argument about affect is that the bodies that encounter these phenomena are both physical and virtual at the same time. Brian Massumi describes this as the "incorporeal" dimension of the body (2002:5). When examining change and movement, Massumi posits that "a body coincides with its own variation when in motion," which means that "to think [of] the body in movement... means accepting the paradox that there is an

incorporeal dimension of the body." (2002:4-5). How does change and movement relate to affect, and sensation?

"Sensation is never simple," Massumi assures the reader. "It is always doubled by the feeling of having a feeling... This complex self-continuity is a putting into relation of the movement to itself: self-relation." (2002:14). Aha! So we bring self into the picture – not only is affect, (emotion, sensation) something that is circulated between bodies but it is something that the body experiences for itself as well. This body that is both concrete and ethereal.

The feeling of feeling, or reflection of a reflection, is something that is very common in anthropology. Massumi describes this feeling of feeling as an echo, which reverberates to the point that it cannot be broken down into its constituent parts. Instead this resonance converts distance into intensity, which is also EXPERIENCE. Experience is the incorporeal dimension of the body. Conversion of the materiality of the body into an event happens here (Massumi 2002). Massumi goes on to argue that this in itself is not yet a subject, but has the capacity to become one. "Becoming" is a breeding ground of potential for Massumi, and yet the trajectory of his moving, shimmering bodies is one of linearity and only one dimension – he never considers 'unbecoming', but rather calls for a "constructivist evolutionism", which I recoil against because of the exclusionary, superior, linear view of evolutionism. Stewart is far more aware of the nuances of becoming and unbecoming, where she writes that thinking about the world through affect meant that:

> "Anthropological objects... [have] to be seen as states of being; they [are] emergent, or suspended in potentiality, or collapsing, or residual, roosting on live matter is if it were their resting point." (2017:192)

Affect forces the anthropologist to not pretend that their objects of study are frozen in space-time. Instead 'modes of being' take centre stage, whether they shine for a single second or cling to being as an endurance of existence. I was drawn to this mode of thought as it is the language of the everyday – we all live our lives through experiences strung together, though not necessarily one after the other if we are to take temporal constraints lightly. My participants have expressed to me and impressed upon me over and over again that affect is

the way that we communicate with others, and it is indeed the way that they most effectively communicated with me.

Another aspect of affect that is important in this thesis is the way that it manifests in reflexivity. Traditionally part of the methodology considerations, I have already stated in this dissertation that I have endeavoured to include myself, and consider the ramifications of what it means to be 'me' in the fieldsite, and how I alter my results through context. What I argue in this dissertation is that Triggerfish also needs to act reflexively in order to more deeply understand our work environment, films we make, and international relationships. Who are we as a company and how does this change the way that we operate? I start to document this through the affective nature of the workplace and the relationships that are apparent through affect, but I argue here that reflexivity is inherently affective in itself as well. Massumi (2002) argues that self-relation is affective, in that it is something that the body experiences for itself as well. Stewart's (2015) understanding of affect as the *potential* to act means that reflecting on oneself and being aware of the potential future actions means the holding of multiple selves in the present moment. Massumi describes this as "a futurity that is contemporary with the past's contemporaneousness with the present" (2002:15); meaning that tendency is able to be in the same temporal space as memory and sensation (his definition of 'affect'). This distinction (that reflexivity is affective) is important because reflexivity is no longer something that I am imposing on Triggerfish from the outside, but rather an affective medium that relationships are able to build on. The ability of *pure* or *unbiased* reflexivity though is a mythical concept (Foley 2002). I return to this in Chapter Six when discussing self-awareness.

Affect is the "micro" of my study, a lens through which I am able to think of experience lived in the everyday as unique and real to those who live through their experiences, while also abstract or 'virtual' as Massumi explains. While I don't explicitly point out the affective nature of each and every piece of data I present, it permeates the work that I do through descriptions of experience, emotion, and relationship. What I aim to prove through this work is that the "micro" of affect can be applied successfully to the "macro" that is neoliberalism, commodification, and globalisation. Affect not only joins these large-scale orders together in relation but acts them out in everyday lived experiences. Looking under the microscope at the

organisms that are these global orders, I hope to uncover the cells that are affect, that build our world as we know it today.

What is Care?

Care as an anthropological idea is not a new one, and some would argue is one of the oldest understandings of what anthropological studies were about, with kinship being focused on as social relation, and therefore a bedrock concept of how society is understood today: Boas, Malinowski, and Radcliffe-Brown all theroised kinship with various philosophical frameworks at the beginning of the twentieth century (Shenk and Mattison, 2011:4). At the other end of the century, care is still important to anthropology and explicitly theorised, with various ways of application in labour studies, institutionalism and governmentality, kinship studies, medical anthropology, as well as ethics dialogues within the discipline. A morally-charged subject, it has a wide reach with multiple disciplines interested in the way that it forms relational ties between people throughout the course of their lives.

Divided into activities and services as well as social relations, emotions, and affects, care is generally defined as 'the work of looking after the physical psychological, emotional and developmental needs of other persons' (Martin, 2012). A wider definition can include maintaining, continuing, and repairing our 'world' 'so that we can live in it as well as possible', which would include 'our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex life-sustaining web' (Tronto 1993:103, as cited in Spiegel, 2005:136). Care therefore permeates nearly all parts of life, but does not consist of universal principles: it is rather situational as well as contextual (Yates-Doerr, 2014). Care therefore looks different from context to context, and the apparent lack of explicit care in some circumstances can require a 'translation' of the ways that care manifests (Fitzgerald, 2014).

Medical anthropology understandably has a large oeuvre of work on the ways that care manifests within the medical treatment of patients[15], with emphasis again being placed on the relationality, vulnerability, and specificity of each case to be examined (Smith-Morris, 2018). In the more general sphere of social anthropology, care is recognised in the experiences and

[15] As well as larger themes around the lived experiences of those who care as well as those who are cared for within medical environments.

relationships of trust, loyalty, and commitment to the wellbeing of others (Martin, 2012). It can be understood as 'an obligation, as a wish, or as a gift that may form or strengthen social relations', and can also be associated with forms of control, monitoring or surveillance, and power (ibid.). The institutionalisation of care has grown throughout the Western world, incorporated into understandings around state governmentality as well as intervention from NGOs, which ties into the larger themes of affect and neoliberalism (ibid.).

In their book *Anthropological Perspectives on Care*, Heike Ddrotbohm and Erdmute Alber (2015) divide these understandings of the subject generally into "care as work", "care as kinship", and "care and the life-course". If one would consider that "care and the life-course" are the ways that work and kinship manifest throughout the general lifespan, one can then focus on the ways that care manifests as work, as well as kinship. The authors are quick to point out that at no point should these differentiations be considered distinct from one another, but rather one should consider the similarities, differences, and political consequences of these boundaries (2015:2).

'Care as work' considers the ways that care as an activity is professionalised and commodified, with strong emphasis on the culturalised perceptions of certain kinds of care through the lenses of gender and ethnicity. Some authors distinguish between 'care work' (not financially remunerated and associated with family and / or kin relations) as opposed to the commodification of this work, 'care labour' (Martin, 2012). Hospitals, nursing homes, funeral parlours, schools, nail salons, brothels, and fitness centres have all been identified as sites of care labour, while unpaid reproductive work is recognised in child-raising, housekeeping (sometimes commodified through the domestic worker industry), and looking after old or infirm family members. This unpaid form of care work is often recognised as 'female' and 'private' work, as gender has also been emphasised in various forms of paid care labour as well.

'Care as kinship' is linked to the unpaid forms of care work, but emphasises the social, emotional and affective dimensions of care. Some anthropologists argue that kinship is solely lived and created through care, exemplified in activities such as feeding, nurturing, or spending time together (Weismantel, 1995 as cited in Drotbohm and Alber, 2015). 'New

kinship studies' have taken the concept of care and applied it to the creation and maintenance of biological ties, as well as the creation of kinship *outside* of biological ties, like adoption and friendship. Always part of morality, 'care' is considered in ways of being a 'good parent' (which can change contextually), as well as more broadly in the question of what it means to be a 'good person' (Martin, 2012).

Within the next chapter *Caring About and Caring For: Neoliberalism, Affect, and the Lived Triggerfish Experience* I hope to link aspects of care as work as well as care as kinship, their affective nature and showing how these are used to sustain a neoliberal work environment. Before I do that however, I do need to generally define neoliberalism as a concept, which is what I do next.

Neoliberalism

As explained above, I understand affect to be interactions between bodies, sensation, experience, and emergent phenomena that are both abstract and real at the same time. These states of being are constantly in flux, and can be undone in a single moment or cling to being as an endurance of existence. Networks of affect have been described by different authors as an 'ecology' (Barrios, 2017) or an 'economy' (Richard and Rudnyckyj, 2009), and both link these systems to economic networks of neoliberalism. So what is neoliberalism, and how does anthropology understand it?

Neoliberalism is an important concept to consider in the global flows of economy. In *Ethnographies of Neoliberalism*, Carol Greenhouse defines it as "the prevailing approach (for now) to government that supplants regulation by law with market forces, and government functions (especially in the service sector) by private enterprise... [This] brings economics and politics together in even more encompassing terms" (Greenhouse, 2012:1). "Neoliberalism," Aihwa Ong writes, "is reconfiguring relationships between governing and the governed, power and knowledge, and sovereignty and territoriality" (2006:3, as cited in Greenhouse 2012). Greenhouse argues that "more than this, it is reconfiguring people's relationships to each other, their sense of membership in a public, and the conditions of their self-knowledge" (2012:2). This has very real implications for an outsourced creative industry.

In an enlightening article from 2011, Mathieu Hilgers explains that the term "neoliberalism" "has no single definition on which all agree". "However," he continues, "... anthropologists have profoundly distinct theoretical frameworks, but share more or less the same empirical vision of the phenomenon":

> "They apply the term to a radicalised form of capitalism, based on deregulation and the restriction of state intervention, and characterised by an opposition to collectivism, a new role for the state, an extreme emphasis on individual responsibility, flexibility, a belief that growth leads to development, and a promotion of freedom as a means to self-realisation that disregards any questioning of the economic and social conditions that make such freedom possible." (2011:352)

He argues that anthropology has three distinct approaches to understanding neoliberalism: as culture, as system, and as governmentality. I will summarise these three approaches, with a strong emphasis on neoliberalism as governmentality.

According to Comaroff and Comaroff "a culture is shaped by an ethics of life", and "the ethics of neoliberalism rests on the belief that it is possible to produce wealth almost by magic" (2000, as cited in Hilgers, 2011:353). The occult economy is used by Hilgers as an example of neoliberalism as a culture - something that links the local to the global, certain contextualised understandings of finance and the economy that separate it from the 'real' economy, and give rise to commodification of the world where wealth becomes more a matter of chance and less of tangible effort.

Neoliberalism as a system on the other hand is shaped by a functionalist view, where authors like Wacquant argue that the constructed system of neoliberalism has resulted in mass incarceration of the poor to help the rich maintain dominance (2010 as cited in Hilgers 2011:356). How neoliberalism has spread to many different geographical locations is also discussed, and the constructivist nature of considering neoliberalism as a system relies on the dissemination to occur from the centre (in this case America) to the peripheries of economic

and geographic location. Hilgers argues that this is a 'Profoundly sociological' way of viewing neoliberalism, and requires a flexible framework in order to maintain relevance without collapsing.

The third anthropological approach to neoliberalism is "neoliberalism as governmentality", which Hilgers says is making great strides in literature on the subject today. It draws its inspiration from the lectures of Foucault on biopolitics, where he seeks to understand neoliberalism as a 'way of doing' (praxis) rather than an ideology or theory (Foucault 2004, as cited in Hilgers 2011:358). This practice of neoliberalism is directed towards objectives and regulating itself through continuous reflection. This reflection is through both what is termed 'technologies of subjectivity' and 'technologies of subjection', which are used in different ways to encourage the agency of 'elites' and minimise the agency of the 'poor'. Technologies of subjectivity encourage agents to optimise their individual choices through knowledge and to perceive the world in terms of competition, while the flip side of the coin, 'technologies of subjection' regulate populations for optimal productivity (Hilgers, 2011:358). Hilgers emphasises that

> 'The drive towards individual responsibilisation and the self as enterprise is a major principle of the neoliberal art of governing...The technologies of domination, the micropolitics of insecurity and the increasing instability of living conditions increase individualisation, competition, and personal responsibility and force individuals to act and understand themselves as the entrepreneurs of their own destiny.' (ibid.)

While Hilgers seems to split those that benefit from neoliberalism (the elites) through technologies of subjectivity and those that are exploited by it ('the poorest and least qualified') through technologies of subjection, I would like to take this a step further and theorise that agents within neoliberal governmentality would be influenced by both these technologies at various points of their lives, and not necessary *only* benefitting from or being exploited by these principles. I'll be able to exemplify this through Triggerfish and its employees or short-term contract artists. Hilgers also emphasises that neoliberalism's capacity

for transposition and implementation is 'due to its plasticity, heterogeneity and multiplicity' - ultimately it ends up being a political mode of optimisation within a given society (2011:360).

While Hilgers goes on to critique this anthropological view of neoliberalism, interestingly Analiese Richard and Daromir Rudnyckyj in their work 'Economies of Affect' (which analyses 'the way in which affect is mobilised to produce subjects in the context of neoliberal transformations' using ethnographic examples in Mexico and Indonesia) use the very Foucault lectures on which neoliberalism of governmentality is built upon by Hilgers, as a base definition of their 'economies of affect' (2009). The authors argue for a view of affect that is a reflexive action, or rather 'conduct of conduct' and a medium in which subjects circulate, as they link Foucault's writing on governmentality to his theories on subjectification (the process by which a subject of government is constituted) (Richard and Rudnyckyj 2009:59). While they don't reference many of the authors that I do when building up an epistemology of affect, they do quote Brian Massumi's 1995 article 'The autonomy of affect' in which he concludes that affect creating wide economic effects is not serendipitous, but rather indicates how *real* affect is and intrinsic to late-capitalism, his term for neoliberalism. I found it fascinating that Hilgers didn't make the link between neoliberalism and affect at all, while Richard and Rudnyckyj write an argument for the inextricable link between the two, using the same literature foundations as Hilgers.

It has to be noted that while neoliberal labour and affect are linked, Richard and Rudnyckyj focus on the links made between neoliberal labour and affect. Carla Freeman, for example, wrote her chapter *Neoliberalism: Embodying and Affecting Neoliberalism* from the latter of the two, writing about entrepreneurship in Barbados linked to affective labour of women[16] (2011). I would like to focus on all the ways that labour at Triggerfish is related to and ultimately expressed by affect, within a neoliberal culture, system or mode of governmentality. This includes the way that gender is linked to the affective notion of 'care'.

[16] This kind of labour has traditionally fallen more on women through the occupations of domestic work, nursing, teaching, sales, waitressing and the like, but Freeman argues that even running one's own business like Colleen, her participant, affective labour is expected and used as a niche market.

The notion of affect and neoliberalism being linked is something that anthropological literature has taken on in recent years, with authors like Roberto Barrios producing an ethnography on disaster management, neoliberalism and affect called *Governing Affect* (2017). His work links what was traditionally thought to be emotionally-devoid work of disaster management and how people think and feel about their lives, arguing that in order to create effective disaster management strategies, policy makers need to engage with the lived experience of those who go through disaster. I would like to extend this into the creative industries, where affect as a product is far more widely recognised than affect that is the medium that creative subjects circulate in.

Contextual Literature

I will start by framing anthropological media studies and themes including media as a social practice, imaginaries and the creation of personhoods and identities through media, and 'mediascapes' as coined by Arjun Appadurai (1996). Appadurai segues nicely into globalization and power relations, which I will frame specifically in terms of labour. I will also list some of the different thematic and theoretical frameworks that are used to frame an inter-continental business relationship, including: Global North / Global South, the geopolitical, globalization from the local, and outsourcing.

Looking at the history of anthropological study of media, Hortense Powdermaker's 1951 book, *Hollywood: The Dream Factory* is unusual for its era as it points the lens towards a western system of production rather than documenting the Other as many anthropologists in the 1950s preferred to do. Powdermaker applied similar anthropological principles when looking at production in Hollywood over years and her primary research question was "What aspects of the system of production and which individuals most influenced movies?" (1951:9). She found answers in power, taboos, values, historical and economic factors, as well as the introduction of new technology and ideas – themes that are still very much apparent in work today. While her methodologies were ethically dubious (she talks about not being able to write freely in front of her informants like she was used to with 'tribal people') she provides a surprisingly early, anthropological look into the production of films in Hollywood. The decade she published her book about live action was the same decade when Walt Disney

was producing films that would stand the test of time: *Cinderella* (1950), *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), *Peter Pan* (1953), *Lady and the Tramp* (1955) and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959).

Ginsburg et al describe in their introduction to *Media Worlds* (2002) that although outliers like Powdermaker exist, "anthropologists came to the study of media a little later than colleagues in some other fields" (2002:3). The interest in media was spurred on by ruptures in theory and methodology in the '80s and '90s, and the development of "anthropology of the present" (Fox 1991, as cited in Ginsburg et al 2002:3) that was used as a framework to explain changes and developments in the 20th century, in which media started becoming more and more important. Ginsburg et al. argue that media is a social practice in that it does things including enabling conversation about power, enforcement of inequalities, sources of imagination, and the impact of technologies on the production of individual and collective identities (2002). I am very interested to see if not only the media itself but the production of media also enables these different kinds of conversations. In his ethnography *Shovelling Smoke* (2003), William Mazzarella examines the Indian advertising industry in the 1990s and early 2000's, explaining the reformation of the industry and ideas of nationalism as global brands become more prevalent. The complexities are intricately picked apart, and his method of analysis is definitely an inspiration for looking at the local in the global, and vice versa. Another ethnography that I draw inspiration from is *Dramas of Nationhood* by Lila Abu-Lughod (2005). She explores the politics of television in Egypt during her extensive fieldwork during the '80s, '90s and early 2000s. She argues that television helps constitute identities of nationality in Egypt, as it bridges the divide between public and private social spheres, links the cultural and the socio-political, all while depicting the lives of "everyday" people or characters on screen. She not only focuses on the audiences of television, but the producers as well. She argues that television producers are "critical mediators, articulating and translating larger projects." (2005:13). This political economy of media has proved valuable when analysing my data.

Another that I drew upon for my research into the creation of identities and personhood through the production of media is Appadurai's *Modernity at Large* (1996). Appadurai frames different ways that the global and local are produced using different technologies (including the social imaginary and nation-state imaginary). While anthropologists are always firmly

located in the local, there is a recognition of technological and institutional changes that sweep across the world, of which Appadurai has covered through his globalisation studies, coining the word 'mediascapes' in the process (1996). He argues that one needs to think about the global cultural economy as a complex, overlapping and disjunctive order best understood in terms of the relationship among five dimensions of global cultural flows: ethnoscapes (the moving landscape of people), mediascapes (the distribution of the electronic capabilities to disseminate information), technoscapes (the global configuration of technology), financescapes (the disposition of global capital) and ideoscapes (a chain of ideas composed of elements of the Enlightenment worldview) (Appadurai 1996:35). These mediascapes are hugely important in my research, not only as finished products that circulate internationally, but collaborative productions as well with stakeholders that are able to traverse international lines due to certain capital that they possess. Through this globalization different power relations also come into play, exemplified by Anna Tsing's *Friction* (2005) in which she documents the generation of 'friction' between the local and global processes in Indonesia and the deforestation and development of natural "rural" parts of the country. I will be framing these globalised 'frictions' within the understandings and theories of labour.

Other theoretical understandings of inter-continental relationships that are pertinent to my arguments include *Southern Theory* (2007) by Raewyn Connell and *Theory from the South* (2012) by Jean and John Comaroff which attempt to flip global theory on its head by locating modernity in Africa – similarly to 'reverse innovation', a concept discussed by Vijay Govindarajan in his TEDxBigApple talk of the same name, in which India trail-blazes medical innovations because of cost restrictions and particular contextual circumstances. (Govindarajan, 2012).

Labour in the creative industries is documented quite extensively, if not anthropologically then politically, sociologically, and through various management and business studies. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2008) argue that there are three labour themes that are very important when doing any kind of analysis of the creative industry: immaterial labour, affective labour, and precarity. Michael Standing, in writing *The Precariat* (2011), outlines the general theory of precarity in the modern world of labour and employment but is derogatory towards those he terms to be on the 'fringes of society'. Most creative employees

are employed on short-term contracts, and a lot of literature focuses on how artists and actors within these systems rely a lot on networking and keeping in contact with a large amount of potential employers (Stahl 2010). In the live-action film industry there is a growing focus on the globalization of visual effects labour, and the impact that this has on companies that create amazing work but are not able to stay afloat financially. Curtin and Vanderhoef (2015) write about Rhythm & Hues, the company that did the majority of the visual effects work on the box-office hit *The Life of Pi*, but shortly after filed for bankruptcy. Mihailova (2016) has also written on the invisible nature of most of the visual effects work on live action films, especially animators who work on motion-captured animation while the live-actor gets all the attention.

Yoon and Malecki (2009) argue that globalization has affected the animation industry in distinct and different ways from the film industry in general, mainly because of the technologies that enable animation production. This is divided into two distinct kinds of production: 2D animation and 3D (CGI) animation – see the introduction and context above for an in-depth definition of these two types of animation. 2D animation is cheaper to produce than 3D animation, and requires a lot less creative input from those who produce the actual content on screen. Large studios mainly in the US and Japan have subcontracted 2D animation production since the 1970s, and have expanded exponentially since the 1990's, to small studios in South Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Conceptualisation, pre-production and post-production stages of the animation production processes still occur at the large studios. In a more recent article, Yoon (2017) discusses the Global Value Chains (GVC's) that link animation production centres throughout the world as the globalisation of the industry continues to become more and more important and complex. Tschang and Goldstein argue that outsourcing "creative" work can only be possible up until a certain point, using the Philippines animation industry as an example (2004; 2010). Tacit knowledge[17] becomes difficult to transfer between studios or the client and outsourcee, and so possible work is limited to what can be conveyed through clear instructions. It is important to note

[17] Tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge are explained as two forms of knowledge important in Global Value Chains by Yoon (2017). Explicit knowledge is easily transferable between people through proper communication, but tacit knowledge is more implied and gained through the doing of tasks, therefore difficult to pass on to someone who has not experienced something first-hand.

however that the Philippines are predominantly a 2D animation industry, which is different to the context that I will be researching. In contrast, Cole argues from a geo-political perspective that geographically distant *collaborations*[18] are beneficial to the European animation industry, as small studios are able to share experiences and knowledge that otherwise would not have been able to build up the industry (2008). Other literature discusses countries trying to reclaim the industry for the production of their own content: Choo writes about Korea's attempts to produce their own content after creating 2D content for Japan for decades. They argue that this is only partially successful, as Korea attempts to escape but constantly mimics Japanese anime, "engaging in a reactionary hyperbolic nationalism in order to "overcome" the rival within" (2014:159).

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to contextualise the theoretical building blocks that the chapters to come are based on. Affect is the theoretical lens that my data is examined through, and while a complex topic to describe succinctly, its nuances allow me the sensitivity to not flatten or homogenise the work that I perform in examining care, neoliberalism, labour, globalisation, and international relationships. Affect allows individual experiences to have impact and meaning on the more generalised theory of the way that animation is practiced in South Africa. This practice is not in a vacuum, and therefore it is also necessary to have an understanding of the various labour practices and systems that Western businesses live in; especially when it comes to understanding neoliberalism and the way that regulation is top-down in nature. Care is another topic that theoretically needs context in order to understand the particular way that it is used at Triggerfish, and how it is used to regulate neoliberalism to varying degrees of success. Having contextualised the history, the field, methodology, and now theoretical context as well, I move on to the "meat" of the dissertation: data analysis. The chapter that follows explores the everyday lived experience at Triggerfish, and the ways that neoliberalism is sustained through an economy of care.

[18] I acknowledge this is different to outsourcing, but still is important when looking at geographically spaced companies. From my work at Triggerfish already, I would be able to argue that collaboration is a better word to term the type of work that Triggerfish is doing with Magic Light Pictures, as they have a lot more creative freedom than the limitations that Tschang and Goldstein (2004; 2010) describe. They are still technically being outsourced as they are subcontractors.

Chapter 5: Caring About and Caring For: Neoliberalism, Affect, and the Lived Triggerfish Experience

Introduction

The movie industry is renowned for being a relentless, cut-throat environment that has no qualms of chewing people up and spitting them out for very little return. While this may be true for the industry in general, at Triggerfish there is an economy of care that underpins the neoliberal undertakings of the enterprise, which can lead to heartfelt interactions and experiences where employees can benefit from the concern and interest the production team and partners of the studio express. However, the way that care is used at Triggerfish to sustain the short-term contract based work that is often intense isn't fully recognised or expressed as a strategy at the company currently. It's important to consciously understand the way a company works in the give and take of a care economy (through both implicit and explicit processes), because as circumstances change the equilibrium of care could change. As projects, staff numbers, and expectations adjust over time, the interpretation of what was said could be held differently, with a more negative outcome. The implicit process of change through 'caring for' artists is especially at risk as it is something that was adopted but not actively enforced. This means that over time as new employees arrive and old employees leave, there is potentially no concrete carry through, which has the potential to leave the care economy lopsided.

A functioning care economy in January and February 2018 at Triggerfish illustrates that neoliberalism (as experienced through precarious media labour) is not monolithic, which means that it isn't a never-ending wave of exploitation. Capitalism works through affect, desire and satisfaction embedded in commodification of the self and others, making it seductive and desirable despite the disastrous consequences for profit over people. Care however allows for the human to be acknowledged, and needs outside of the profit margin to be met. We also however need to be conscious of the 'dark side' of affective labour as well. It cannot be the cure all and end all for the way that the company is run. Business structures outside of the social imaginary of care need to also have strong foundations, and care can often stop people from receiving and giving constructive criticism.

In this chapter I set out to do several things: illustrate the ways that affect is at work in the day-to-day functioning of the company, contextualise the following chapters which deal more with the way the product is thought about rather than labour or the work experience, and bring to attention the ways that the company functions that are not always acknowledged and therefore susceptible to loss, or exploitation.

It is important to set up this backdrop of the economy of care as it is integral to how Triggerfish conducts business, and ultimately sells a product. One cannot understand the company's thinking around what it means to be 'African' without first understanding the lived experience of a Triggerfish employee. As a company, the foundation of care is integral to everything that we produce, with an unspoken understanding that care will create greater returns in various ways in what is essentially a neoliberal environment. What is also not acknowledged is that the economy of care at Triggerfish is maintained directly by women, and it needs to be understood that this is an additional form of labour that is not always recognised as such, therefore creating the potential for unfair division of expectation and responsibility when it comes to caring for artists.

"We're Actively Changing the Studio Culture"

"We're actively changing the studio culture here, and you need to be a part of that change." Dan sat at the front of the room, in front of a desk with a PC and a giant screen on it. He grinned at the interns, all perched on different surfaces or chairs, facing him with timid smiles. It was the beginning of the year which signalled a new intake from last year's graduates, fresh young candidates[19] with stars in their eyes.

"This is an insane opportunity - and you are a gun for hire." Dan's infectious enthusiasm is something to experience in person, punctuated by seemingly unshakeable confidence and a vibrant energy that bounces through his lanky frame.

"Make sure that you're having those conversations, make sure that you're getting the most out of this. We're at the point in the South African industry that we're really cheap,

[19] Internships at Triggerfish are government-subsidised, paid, nine-month long positions where interns are expected to produce artist work (not just passively learn from other artists) and are credited as full artists in the final film. In 2018 there were fifteen interns on *Zog* alone (twenty two at the studio in total) and the studio has struggled to reconcile with artists who feel that they overly rely on inexperienced, cheap labour rather than try to retain more experienced, but more expensive, staff.

really good, and there's nobody here. It's up to you to make the most of that opportunity through the kind of projects that we're working on."

"What's exciting about *Zog* is creative input from everyone. I am not burdened by genius like some of our previous directors, and I honestly don't have all the answers. We all have the opportunity to be adding value to this film, leads should be able to make calls on the fly, and taking responsibility for our own work is something that I really want to encourage."

"Triggerfish hires overachievers with low self-esteem," he continues, grinning at his audience, and this is met by smiles and low laughter from artists who have been asked to share their experiences of being an intern the year before. When opening to the floor, an artist with curly blonde hair seriously states:

"Resist pleasing people, and know when to say no. As artists and with Trigger's recipe for hiring, be confident and also don't let yourself be overworked. You are *going* to burn out if you work 12 hour shifts."

Dan adds: "We are making a movie, not saving lives."

"People who are most productive work smart. You deserve to be here. Cut self-doubt out. You made it! Just remember that." - Fieldnotes, 8 January 2018

During my time on *Zog*, 'studio culture' was a buzz-word that was mentioned at more than one studio meeting. Dan, one of our directors and long-time Triggerfish contract-employee, took it up as a mantra in the way that he championed a *new* culture, better than the one before. In the introduction to this dissertation I briefly outlined the past of the studio, with many gruelling projects that were plagued with difficulties for a variety of reasons, inside or outside the studio's control depending on who you speak to. The most recent project completed, *The Highway Rat*, was the exact fulfilment of the director's vision, and relied heavily on the free labour of employees because of various budgetary and time constraints. One can argue that this free labour was given because there was an element of caring about the work being done already - I argue though that this was harnessed in a new, positive way by Dan and others that wanted to start a new way of thinking. "Changing the studio culture" however requires asking at least two questions:

- What processes are being used to change the culture?
- Where are they heading - what is the ultimate goal or blueprint of an ideal "culture"?

I'm purposefully ignoring the anthropological question of "what is culture?"[20] because I believe in this instance it is better to follow the general understanding of how 'culture' is viewed, especially in more corporate settings, rather than unsatisfactorily answer a question that can be debated (and in many undergraduate settings, has been) for a whole semester. In this case the general understanding, or definition, would be: the beliefs and practices of the studio that are encouraged and actively sought after in order for the workforce to behave in a certain way and understand their work in a particular light. The company encourages certain ways of thinking and acting in the workplace - ways of thinking I refer to in this context as "caring about", and ways of acting "caring for". In this way, *changing* the studio culture is both a beginning point as well as an outcome in itself, just through the introduction and encouragement of thinking through care in particular ways. Both **explicit** ideas of change (through caring about) as well as **implicit** ideas of change (through caring for) are encouraged, which it is hoped ultimately leads to a happier, more productive team that feels a sense of ownership about what they do, and the relationships that they foster.

The two different affective responses to "changing the studio culture" are both rooted in the theory of care as outlined in Chapter Three: First, the artists should *care about* the project, motivated through the process theorised by neoliberal governmentality - that is, motivated through responsibilisation, self-regulation, and governance. This is explicit through the way that Dan almost commands the interns to make the most of the opportunity in front of them, take ownership, and be confident in the workspace. Second, the artists should be *cared for* by the studio: implicit, affective labour by management and the production team that as a neoliberal process creates a relationship with precarious employees quickly and effectively. The affective density of the injunction to care and expect care allows for not only convivial relations but also a means to measure relatedness to company ideals, the "culture" that Dan wants to encourage.

[20] This does not however mean that I cannot engage with this question in different contexts, and I would like to suggest texts from classics such as Bourdieu's "Structure, Habitus Practices" (1990) and Fonlon's "Ideas of Culture" (1965), to more radical contributions such as Lorencova and Trnka's book "Quantum Anthropology: Man, Cultures, and Groups in a Quantum Perspective" (2016).

Explicit, Affective, Neoliberal Processes of Change

In the introduction of this dissertation I explained that academics have a hard time pinning down the exact definition of 'neoliberalism', but anthropologists agree empirically (more or less) that the term is applied as a 'radicalised form of capitalism, based on deregulation and the restriction of state intervention, and characterised by an opposition to collectivism… an extreme emphasis on individual responsibility, flexibility, [and] a belief that growth leads to development' (Hilgers, 2011:352). Regulation of agents through 'technologies of subjectivity' and technologies of subjection' happen interchangeably depending on context, which Richard and Rudnyckyj argue are intrinsically linked to affect (2009). In his speech to the interns, Dan encourages the artists to care about the project through concepts that align with neoliberal governmentality, namely: responsibilisation, governance, and self-regulation.

> "What's exciting about *Zog* is creative input from everyone. I am not burdened by genius like some of our previous directors, and I honestly don't have all the answers."

Placing ownership on all artists to contribute creatively to a project ('responsibilising' them, in neoliberal governance parlance) is a double-edged sword. The opposite style of directing to the one proposed by Dan is a dictatorial, individual vision with very little input from anyone else, hundreds of hands being used for their technical skill but mimicking a master plan that has been laid out for them, letter by letter. Artists are not robots, and therefore being given creative authority over their contribution to the project can be seen as a breath of fresh air, and acknowledgement of the human being in the team player. However, "creative input from everyone" also places presumed agency, as well as responsibility in the hands of each individual on the project, including Dan's audience: interns. This echoes the "extreme emphasis on individual responsibility" in neoliberalism - taking ownership of your contribution. This in turn encourages self-regulation. It is no longer the responsibility of the production team, the director or any other authority to make sure that work is up to a certain standard. Interns are given a sense of ownership over the task that they are performing, and therefore hold themselves to a high standard because their name (the human rather than the number) is associated with their artistic output.

What isn't acknowledged through this responsibilisation however is the power dynamics that are in play. Dan assumes that everyone in the room has equal agency, and that, should they consider something wrong or think of something better to contribute, interns (of an average age at about 21 years old and entering their first professional job) should be able to speak up and question a director with more than ten years working experience who also, regardless of experience, holds a hierarchical position of power in the film-making world. In a large live-action production, interns wouldn't be able (or even allowed) to interact with the director ever, rather being managed by their various heads of departments. While animation is very different to live action and the hierarchy not observed in the same overt way, only people in a place of power can pretend that there isn't any hierarchy to begin with. The interns, unlike Dan, would be only too aware of their position in the pecking order.

I want to emphasise that Triggerfish is a really unique place in that encouraging against the hierarchical 'god-like' perspective of the director was genuinely sought after by Dan, Max and the team and when harnessed correctly, ultimately did make a stronger project in *Zog* and then later again in *The Snail and the Whale*. The purpose of this chapter is not to brush aside any of the encouragement or good-intent, but instead I want to illustrate what a delicate balance the economy of care at Triggerfish entailed, when all that Dan says can also be applied to what is considered to be a morally-void concept like neoliberalism.

> "This is an insane opportunity - and you are a gun for hire… Make sure that you're having those conversations, make sure that you're getting the most out of this… It's up to you to make the most of that opportunity."

Once again ownership and agency over career choices and opportunity is placed squarely on the shoulders of the intern, making them the sole influence over their success and downfall. In addition the self is presented as an enterprise - something which the individual has full control over, as well as something to be purposefully worked on, a 'major principle of the neoliberal art of governing' (Hilgers 2011:358). This implies that actions as interns will have direct correlation with the kind and quality of people and projects they will work on in 20 years time. Agency is given to the individual in a mechanism that Hilgers describes as a

'technology of subjectivity', where agents are encouraged to optimise their individual choices through knowledge and to perceive the world in terms of competition[21] (2011:358). "Gun for hire" implies and reinforces the individual not tied down to a certain institution or set of morals, rather a free agent who has the (perceived) choice to be hired. The irony of a free agent being asked to buy into an affective care-economy was not lost on me: interns, shouldered with their individuality and freedom, were simultaneously being co-opted into a larger project of working together towards a common goal. Therefore the flip side of Hilger's 'social technology' also applies: in the 'technology of subjection' populations are regulated for optimal productivity and taking away any true ability to make their own choices. The interns in this scenario are therefore both subjected *and* subjectivised by Dan - given the agency of their own destiny but also being saddled with responsibility that they don't have the social capital to negotiate. Agents within neoliberal governmentality would be able to be influenced by both of these technologies that Hilgers puts forward, and not only benefit from or be exploited by these principles.

> "Triggerfish hires overachievers with low self-esteem"... "Resist pleasing people, and know when to say no. As artists and Trigger's recipe for hiring, be confident and also don't let yourself be overworked."

Dan lumps himself in the category of "overachievers with low self-esteem" (after all, he too has been hired by Triggerfish) and therefore there's an understanding of recognition of *everyone* in the room suffering from the same "shortcomings", or soft spots to be manipulated by business - hence the laughter. 'Caring about' is also apparent here in the concept of low self-esteem: either not caring about oneself enough, or caring about what other people think too much, and therefore not being able to clearly see one's worth in the world. All of this is highly affective and can be manipulated by neoliberal capitalism should the employee be too involved in their own emotions of caring. Companies that would want to exploit these feelings would encourage unpaid overtime for employees to prove their self worth, or

[21] Hilgers draws on theories of technologies of governmentality, subjectivity and subjection directly from Michel Foucault, the authoritative figure on self-regulation and technologies of the self with works like *Discipline and Punish* (1995).

otherwise exploit overperformance of workers who aren't able to see their self worth. The phrase is tongue-in-cheek and therefore not meant to directly represent the apparent lack of mental health at Triggerfish. The more positive, healthy description would probably be 'overachievers who are obsessed with excellence', or perfectionists who are self-critical but entirely aware of their own excellence and want to push it to the limits. Whichever way it is phrased, the heads of the project are now absolved of any responsibility in regulating exactly what level of perfection is achieved and artists are again responsibilised, subjectified and subjected through self-regulation of their own perfectionist tendencies. To underline the point a third time, interns cannot be expected to regulate themselves in a way that provides any kind of real agency. While production and directors wash their hands of artists' perfectionism, should the director want to push for something that was beyond the talent, scope or budget of the project it would be almost impossible to say "no" to them because of willingness to please, and wanting to remain in favour with those in power. The biggest lesson I learnt personally as a producer in 2018 was that 'no' was almost forbidden - rather reply with "yes, but": "yes we can do that, but the project will be delivered in January instead of November", or "yes, but we need more money to make it happen." The hidden power dynamics make this an impossible task for most of the team, let alone an intern who is just starting to learn how to navigate the workplace and learn about their strengths and limitations.

Artists were inducted into the project in a kind way with Dan negotiating encouragement, a warning, a lesson. Within this caring offering however interns were in turn asked to care about the project in ways that subjected them directly to neoliberal affective economy, that could manipulate and exploit workers in a one-sided relationship that ignored the implicit power relations that occur in the office. How was this balanced out then, even with Dan's enthusiasm and good will? There wasn't a big speech, but there are various *implicit* ways of creating affective processes of change that allow for sustainability in precarious, short-term contract work.

Implicit, Affective, Neoliberal Processes of Change

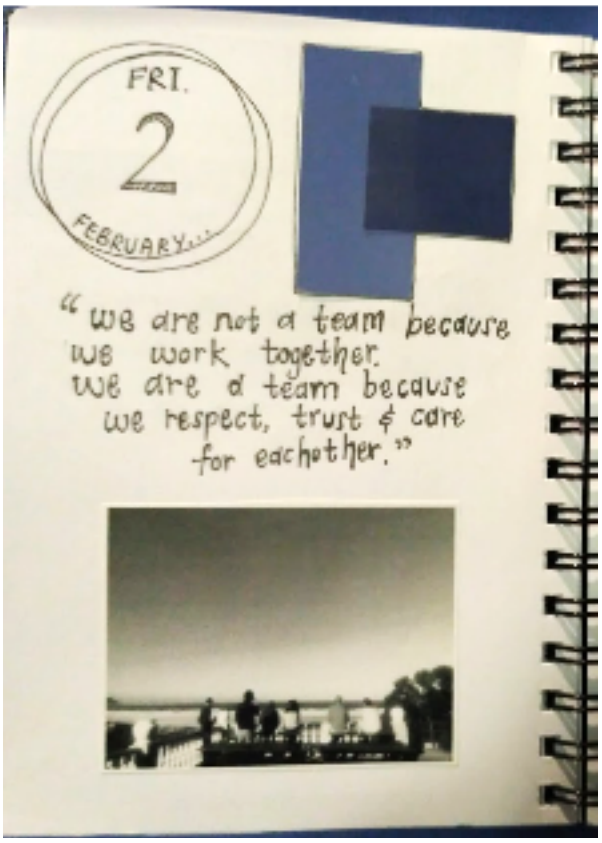
Going back to Tronto's processes of care (1993), the attentive, caring about that artists are expected to put into their work is balanced by 'taking care of', what I term as 'caring for'. This is never explicitly expressed by Triggerfish as something that they will do, but is instead

shown through language use, encouraged ideologies, and activities, actions and services that the studio provides to the artists. Data is therefore a little more diverse but still reflects an integral way of how the company operates.

It also needs to be understood that care is an additional type of labour that is not always acknowledged as such, which can lead to an unfair expectation of who is expected to put in this extra labour, and when it is required. In her chapter *Neoliberalism: Embodying and Affecting Neoliberalism*, Carla Freeman distinguishes between *reproductive* forms of labour (normally at home like housework and raising children) that is usually unpaid, compared to *productive* forms of labour in traditional, 9 - 5 jobs (2011). Not surprisingly, reproductive labour is coded as female, and productive labour as male. I show that 'caring for' and 'taking care of' labour at Triggerfish is likewise heavily gendered, in that it is nearly always women providing care in various ways to artists that are both part and not part of their official job descriptions. It is important for this to be acknowledged so that there isn't an unconscious expectation of care labour to be performed only by women, or for all women at Triggerfish to be expected to 'care for' just because of their gender.

Language use was the first implicit way of getting the 'caring for' message across to artists. In one of the visual diaries collected, I couldn't have asked for it to be expressed more perfectly:

Addendum E



Addendum F

> "Triggerfish is **family**. Saying goodbye to family sucks. I have worked with Jovan since 2010 & for 7 years we have been colleagues. Seeing people leave really affects me…"
> - Entry from Friday 26th January, Addendum E (emphasis my own)

> "We are not a team because we work together. We are a team because we respect, **trust** and **care** for each other." - Entry from Friday 2nd February, Addendum F (emphasis my own)

SJ uses words like "family", "trust", "respect" and "care" in her visual diaries, and interestingly assigns similar colours to both days that talk about the kind of affective labour like familial relations and caring for each other. On the 26th of January 2018 we said farewell to a colleague in the usual way of gathering in a circle at the end of the day and thanking them for what they had contributed in the time that they were with the company (part of which is pictured in SJ's black and white photograph). Terming coworkers as "family" places an added

level of relation: there is an expectation (and sometimes even obligation) of care between family members which is now extended to the workforce even though they do not have blood-relations or live together. This kind of language use encourages an implicit ideology between employees, which allows the kind of affective behaviour that is appropriate between family members to become appropriate in the workplace as well. The blurring between private and public successfully allows people to "feel at home", and "with family", even though family dynamics can be complex and not always caring or appreciative .

Another way of implicitly emphasising care for artists is through the kinds of ideologies and frameworks that are encouraged and invested in outside of project production. "Relational Leadership" is a course that all heads of departments and the project manager, line producer, director and co-producer attended at the beginning of February 2018. Designed to try and identify what individuals require to make sure that their relational needs are met (and the object of this being that those who have their needs met are happier, more productive and communicate with others better), each person identifies their top three needs by taking a questionnaire and this is supposed to guide our interactions with each other at work. "A connected and caring team" is what is scribbled on my notes from a meeting with the production team introducing us to the concept. The affective emphasis on care, connection and relationships between people again supports the company's drive to create a culture of nurture - something that is, at face value, opposite to a focus on profit margins.

In his paper *Social Reproduction and Urban Competitiveness: How Dominican Bodegueros Use the Care Economy*, Adam Pine writes about how care work and neoliberalism "are often assumed to be polar opposites," but "this dichotomy overlooks the ways in which caring relationships shape business practices and undergird the competitive city" (2015:273). He goes on to argue that neoliberalism is not a monolithic structure, but rather an economy that is intertwined with "a myriad of other economic systems", one of which is the "other economy", as termed by Susan Donath (2000, as cited in Pines, 2015:275). The "other economy", or care economy, influences and is influenced by the wider capitalist society, where they rely on each other to fulfil their social functions. Pines conducted ethnographic research in different Dominican *bodegas* or corner grocery stores in the City of Philadelphia, America. He argues that grocers, or *bodegueros,* use care as part of their business practices that blur the

boundaries between public and private spaces, which results in closeness and familiarity that encourages better business in "minding the store". Pines explains,

> "This helped both the bottom line of the store and shoppers who benefitted from living in a location where retail opportunities were enhanced by a business that catered to their unique needs" (2015:284).

Catering to specific and diverse needs is also something that Triggerfish tries to do when looking after their employees. This is a list of just some of the things that the studio offers, outside of the normal needs of producing animation:

- Free counselling
- Compassionate leave
- Subsidised cooked meals, with a free option
- Popcorn machines
- Fresh fruit every afternoon
- Four different kinds of tea on offer
- Truth coffee bean-to-cup machines on tap
- Squash club
- Soccer club
- Running club
- Life Drawing classes
- Craft club
- Hiking
- Book Club
- Board games nights
- Annual camping trips
- Directing / movie club
- Charity work
- Triggerfish foundation (expanded upon in the next chapter)
- Treats on holidays (Valentine's day, Halloween)

- Cake day every month for birthdays
- Beer o'clock on a Friday with your choice of alcoholic / non-alcoholic beverage provided

While the studio itself provides care through funding these activities and services, the five male partners are 'removed' through the administrative team who are all women and do the actual work when it comes to ordering the birthday cake for the month or heading up the events committee to organise the yearly camping trip. Our studio manager, HR manager and head of administration are all female[22]. This is no surprise when it is well known that the work of care has "historically been a sphere associated with women… a set of practices and sensibilities imbued with femininity and naturalized as such" (Hochschild, 1983:164).

Addendum G - management structure of the studio circa February 2018. Women highlighted in bold.

Producers also have a unique position of care in the production. Often referred to as a "momma-bear" or a "big sister", the familial role is often encouraged and expected. Once considered a "male industry", increasingly producers are female, with the production team on *Zog* being female at a ratio of 4:1. Care work is seen as traditionally being a female role (nurses, teachers, and hairdressers are examples of this). There are gendered expectations of a nurturing, familial role with values such as softness, wholistic care, and encouragement rather than criticism while producing. Beyond the ordering of things, women are expected to create a warm, inviting workplace where artists have time spent specifically on them and their needs. The emotional labour of care is delegated to the women, as well as any support that might be required. Freeman (2011:357) also emphasizes the devaluation of affect-laden work, such as care, and as immaterial work expands it is important to be aware of this form of labour in the

[22] See Addendum G overleaf for a more visual representation of this.

company, and the work that is does to neutralise the moral negatives of neoliberalism that subject workers to exploitation and dehumanisation.

Conclusion

While I have made the distinction between explicit and implicit processes of change that have been utilised by the studio, even the explicit responsibilisation of interns by Dan is not considered as such in the moment of what is meant to be a rousing speech of inspiration to start the year. While the company does actively make decisions to support its employees in ways that can be seen as "above and beyond", the company has never taken on an economy of care as part of its business-success strategy. Not acknowledging this means that the economy of care has the potential to become skewed over time, with undue emphasis placed on expectation of extra services by employees, or the company expecting care to supplement income for employees, rendering the economy liable to instability.

Genuine concern from artists and wanting to contribute to "changing the studio culture" illustrate how the care economy at Triggerfish functions, both explicitly (through responsibilisation and self-governance, termed "caring about") as well as implicitly (with language use, ideology, and services offered by the company, termed "caring for"). The difficulties in not being able to immediately identify the care economy as a company means that power dynamics, oxymoronic ideas around free agency, and not identifying the gendered role of care all go unconsidered and are not addressed as problems to find solutions for. Nevertheless, the affective functioning of the company is integral to understanding the way that it operates its business and keeps itself in equilibrium.

In the next chapter I look at another kind of affective thinking that is circulated at the studio. This time the ways that the studio promotes itself as 'African' as well as the ways that employees think about 'African animation' is considered.

Chapter 6: "Bringing African Stories to the World": Sitting in Between the Real and Imagined, the Local and Global

Introduction

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) warns her audience in her now-famous[23] TED talk of the dangers of a "single story", a one-dimensional narrative that only portrays one perspective of a whole people, culture, or country. Essentially talking about stereotypes, she illustrates the different "single story" narratives that have been portrayed in her life, from growing up in middle-class Nigeria, to moving to America and being told that, as an author, her writing isn't "authentically African" because the people she writes about aren't starving, and drive cars instead of walking. This TED talk is often prescribed as undergraduate material to watch, and has spread in popular culture the world over, with people nodding and saying to each other, "Africa is so much more than a single story of starving children, Ebola, or HIV Aids. We know more than this single perspective."

Triggerfish as a company is also aware of this "single story" narrative, and has promoted representing the continent in ways other than the usual stereotypes consistently since their first feature film in 2010. In 2015 while promoting the *Story Lab* competition, Stuart said in an interview with *Cartoon Brew*[24]: "Africa is more than a single story. The role of the news media is mostly to report threatening aspects of current affairs - corruption, war, crime, poverty, disease - but we like to tell friendly, fun, resourceful, and welcoming stories of Africa to help balance people's impressions. We look for stories presenting us with a window into an Africa different from our preconceptions, and surprising to our audiences." (Thill, 2015)

More and more public discourse (online as well as the more traditional media outlets) calls for "authentic representation" of both women and minority ethnicities in entertainment and media, with #MeToo and #OscarsSoWhite being trending hashtags on social media in the past two years. At Triggerfish this is recognised as well: "For the last two years, we've seen diversity become a buzzword," Stuart said in another interview in 2017. "I think the world is

[23] Viewed over 19 million times on the TED website alone
[24] An international animation news website, based in New York, USA.

becoming more aware than ever that the old-school way of doing things is crumbling and the media is waking up. I've been going to MIPCOM[25] for the last 10 years and I've never seen distributors looking for diversity like this" (Mak, 2017). While the attention and 'buzz' has made very little real difference when it comes to the statistics of representation in Hollywood (Smith et. al., 2019), there is a growing trend with production companies realising that it is possible to create hits like *Black Panther* or *Crazy Rich Asians*, and an audience that is asking for originality, authenticity, and representation of social categories outside white, cisgendered, heterosexual, male protagonists. Going beyond the "single story" is definitely the first step in understanding the ways that narrative is used in the world (and I'm glad that people are more and more aware of stereotypes that are portrayed through media), but narrative and stories can be used and manipulated in other ways even when multiple perspectives are depicted.

Triggerfish as a company has promoted the idea of 'African animation' for years now, helping develop the industry through co-founding *Animation SA*, the official industry body for South Africa (the closest thing to a union the industry has), promote learning and cross-pollination through *Animation XChange* (an ongoing seminar series aimed at animation students) and founding 'Animate Africa', part of the Triggerfish Foundation which is a registered Public Beneficiary Organisation. *The Story Lab* was a 2015 initiative that partnered with Disney to find 'extraordinary talent in Africa' (Szalai quoting Anthony, 2015) and 'the geniuses scattered everywhere' (Mak quoting Stuart, 2017) who are the continent's 'next generation of storytellers', to 'connect them to opportunity so that they can develop their voice' (ibid). In 2018 and 2019 the studio created the *Triggerfish Academy*, a free online learning website which at the moment has a 25-segment short course in the basics of animation. This was described as a way for 'mining the rough diamond', as one of the partners of Triggerfish described it to a tour group passing through our office[26].

[25] 'Marché International des Programmes de Communication', or in English the 'International Market of Communications Programmes', an annual trade show for the television industry held in Cannes, France.

[26] To be fair the *Academy* does more than 'mine' talent for the benefit of Triggerfish - it encourages community stimulation, promotes arts at a school level in a system that very often discards creative subjects for a focus on the sciences, and encourages children to find their own passions and talents that they might not have realised in the first place. The *end* goal has always however been stated as finding the 'cream of the crop' and hidden talent that might otherwise have supposedly remained dormant, with other societal benefits along the way.

‘Africa’ is the word you see again and again when reading about the studio online, browsing their website (the landing page just says ‘Join Africa’s Leading Animation Studio’), or watching any TV inserts that the studio has been featured on. It’s a major selling point for the Triggerfish brand. Even though it can all be brought together under the heading ‘Africa’, there is a lot to unpack in the small differences that Triggerfish deploys this word (standing for a broader idea or concept) in its marketing alone. This is also contrasted with the ways that employees did not take the definition for granted, but broke down the different components of what makes something ‘African’ in the focus groups where we tried to discuss what ‘African animation’ really was.

I argue in this chapter that Africa itself is used as an affective medium that animates particular sensibilities about the world, especially when used in a colonial, racialised context. While the previous chapter set the groundwork showing the reader how affect permeates the neoliberal labour that we perform at Triggerfish, I will be breaking down the different ways that ‘African’ animation is expressed at the studio in this chapter, illustrating the ways that the concept of ‘Africa’ is used as an affective medium in both the marketing and official publicity of the studio through the real and imagined identity of ‘African’, as well as the way that Triggerfish locates itself *outside* of Africa when trying to ‘give voice to the voiceless’, or mediating between the local continent and global ‘international stage’ by providing opportunities to those who supposedly otherwise wouldn’t receive them.

The Difference (and Commodification) of ‘Africa’

At a Monday morning meeting in early April 2019, Stuart, CEO of Triggerfish, stood in front of his employees and said, “If anyone were to ask you what Triggerfish does as a company, what would you reply?” There were limited responses in the room, 9am in the morning being far too early for enthusiastic engagement. “Bringing African stories to the world!” Stuart emphasised, answering his own question. “If there is *one* thing that you say about the studio, this should be it. ‘Bringing African stories to the world’ is at the heart of everything that we do.”

This tagline made my ears prick up, as I had been asking employees during my official field work research what exactly ‘African animation’ was. Wanting to find some written evidence

of ‘Bringing African Stories to the World’, after the Monday morning meeting I went and did some searching on the company website and other promotional material, but came up with very little. Writing an email to Stuart, I asked if I had perhaps missed this ‘all important’ tagline somewhere in the marketing and branding of the studio. “We haven’t explicitly used this tagline publicly,” Stuart explained.

> “It’s been more of an internal rallying call that we started using since Zambezia, but since we’ve still needed to do bread-and-butter work like the Magic Light films, we’ve needed to look like service work isn’t a second class citizen within our company mindset, so as not to deter any potential clients.
>
> That said, with the public announcement of *Mama K’s* and with our pipeline of *Seal Team*, [*2nd feature film*] and [*3rd feature film*], it may be time to commit publicly to this.
>
> As a tagline, we’ve used it in investor pitch decks since 2013. It’s always been our main value proposition when I present to MBA students or potential investors.
>
> Probably the closest we get publicly is this, which works for our service clients and our local content:
> ‘6. We have a vision. At our heart, we want to improve the world by bringing the incredible talent from Africa to the international stage. In doing this, we want to inspire a continent and blow the minds of the global audience with our creativity, resourcefulness, and dedication to excellence.’” (Personal correspondence[27], 22 April 2019)

[27] Permission granted to quote here

I will be coming back to the idea of service work and minimising our own brand when it comes to providing production services for other (international) companies in the next chapter, but the main idea that I would like to focus on here is the idea of 'Africa' as a 'value proposition'. This is the closest overt recognition I documented, of the understanding of 'Africa' as something (in this case, a characteristic or identity-marker) that is marketable to international audiences and distributors who want to pay for this identifiable difference.

Employees at the company are aware of this as well: during one of the focus groups, there was a discussion about the way that certain products were synonymous with their geographical origin:

[someone talking about Lord of the Rings] "... but because the director was a New Zealander… not even the cast is like mostly New Zealander, and you know, like the main cast. So it's like.. It's quite a weirdly fluid thing, and I think it's… I think… but the thing about African stuff, politically speaking, is that you know, the narrative around Africa and colonialism and an emerging African identity, you know, it's something that is like… it's something that like a lot of people are trying to…. You know, they're trying to have the - agh, what would you call it? - like not the monopoly, but the…"

Someone else tries to help:

"They're trying to be the first to say it. They're trying to be the first to do it."

This only helps so much.

"Well ja, but there's a sort of… the thing about being African and coming from Africa, what is African, is a very political thing, that…"

I try to help:

"Would you say it's been commodified?"

They answer:

"Well, I think we're hoping that it *can* be." The table laughs.

Jean and John Comaroff, in their now seminal work *Ethnicity Inc.* document the ways that ethnicity, defined here as the 'species of collective subjectivity that lies at the intersection of identity and culture' (2009:1), is incorporated into the capitalist, consumer-driven economies the world over - both internally to a single society and across multiple societies or even

continents (2009). This manifests in multiple ways, from commodifying certain traditional roles or services for a wider, foreign audience, to creating a brand for a national identity or 'turning tribes into corporations' as has been documented in Kenya, South Africa and elsewhere. They document the ways that the recognition of concrete identity is used to create an income of some kind, and show that at the same time the validity of that identity rests in its recognition from the outside: recognition that rests in the consumer (2009:10). The identity that Triggerfish therefore takes on of being 'African' (rather than 'South African', 'Capetonian', 'multicultural' or some other kind of identifying characteristic) is a deliberate 'putting on' of difference in a global market, where difference is recognised as desirable, and ultimately sell-able. This is not to say that Triggerfish doesn't have a claim to the identity that they are representing (South Africa is one of the fifty four recognised countries on the continent of Africa), but it still needs to be understood as a deliberate identification that does more than just indicate to outsiders where Triggerfish is located geographically, and the laughter at the focus group identifies the awkward connotations of using the difference to make money.

The Comaroffs indicate that the commodification of ethnicity both sustains *and* breaks down the singularity of identity, through the bounded identification of what is 'African' (as opposed to what is not), as well as the homogenization of everything that falls within the chosen category. Nelson Graburn is quoted in *Ethnicity Inc*, writing about the creation of artwork for 'outsiders', which convey the message "We exist; we are different; we can do something we are proud of; we have something uniquely ours" (1976:26 in 2009:10). This defined existence with a specific identity though requires all those who identify within that category to 'become' the same, in the way that animation from Morocco, Nigeria or South Africa is all reduced to one category of 'African animation', regardless of how different the creation and background of the media is. The specific identification of 'Africa' therefore, as wide a category as it is, is used in order to create tangible difference from the 'normal', the 'Global North' or the 'West', and this difference is commodified through it being a 'value proposition'.

William Mazzarella explains this a little differently. In his ethnography *Shoveling Smoke: Advertising and Globalization in Contemporary India*, Mazzarella encounters the complex

commodification of identity as well. He writes about the advertising industry in India during the 1990's, a period of embracing the global while still trying to negotiate an identity of being 'authentically' Indian (2003). Mazzarella shows that the advertising industry, a reflection of society in general, presents the concepts of cultural integrity and globalisation as compatible and reinforcing rather than at odds with each other (2003:14). Dipesh Chakrabarty is used as a theorist to critique capitalism and the commodity form, which is conventionally used either to destroy difference entirely (the fear of Americanisation, or the erasure of identity) or in the second case, converting difference from a contested, political act into a matter of preference or 'taste' (Chakrabarty n.d., as cited in Mazzarella 2003:19). He makes use of Marx's understanding of the commodity form to show that erasure or conversion to a lifestyle is never a complete disavowal of the original difference or lived experiences of individuals that it draws from, which means that there is a "gap" in which the commodity settles, not quite fully reified, and not entirely concrete either (2003:19-20).

With 'Africa' being Triggerfish's marketable brand, it performs and projects as Nelson Graburn describes - "we exist, and our difference is valuable", just as the focus group participants above hope it to be. This is something that Stuart emphasises to the MBA students that take tours around the studio[28], and there is no contestation as to whether the identity of Triggerfish is 'African' or not - we are, and therefore we are able to conduct business in the world from this identity marker. A creation of an identity that is (hopefully and presumably) outside of what America or Europe currently represents, Triggerfish makes sure that we have something that not many other people can claim to have - 'authentic African talent'. And we also definitely *do* have that, with lots of individual artists, writers, directors, and producers at our studio who are African in the sense that they have citizenship to a country on the continent of Africa[29], with very real life-stories and experiences of working in the creative industry. However there is a doubling of the idea of 'African talent' that is marketed in a single, homogenising sentence to investors who do not know the artists' stories, and take this 'difference' at face value. Cameroonian artists at the studio have very different life stories to South Africans, but these are collapsed when presented to investors as one and

[28] Students from colleges that use Triggerfish as a case study of a "successful business", success being understood from a specific ideology of business studies.
[29] While there are different ways of including or excluding people through definitions of 'African', I am using the definition that is used by Triggerfish when screening employees.

the same. These two ways of being 'African', the real and the abstract, are held together in the "gap" between reification and concreteness described by Mazzarella (2003).

This gap between the embodied and the conceptual is something that theorists of affect chase after doggedly, most notably in my reading of both Kathleen Stewart and Brian Massumi, although their styles of writing differ greatly. In Chapter 3's discussion on affect I discussed Stewart's description of a road, and how she holds it as. "a thing simultaneously, coterminously real and virtual, abstract and concrete…" (2012:522). Anna Tsing aptly refers to this as "the grip of the worldly encounter" (2006). The road lives in between being a physical tar surface, and a memory of country roadtrips. Massumi writes through the same thinking (although a little less poetically) when he talks about experience being the incorporeal dimension of the body, where conversion from materiality into an event happens (2002). The ways that Triggerfish therefore experiences being 'African' as an experience of shame, pity, subjected to violence, denigrated into a new imaginary: creative, unique stories with a particular perspective, and pride in the difference and uniqueness of being 'African', is an affective experience. In this experience the nuances of being both sides of the coin at once are never quite fully explained - especially when it is being documented in the mirror-view of an ethnography.

It is not enough however to claim the difference (labelling ourselves as 'African' on the website, promotional material about Triggerfish and in talks about the studio) without *producing* difference as well. The 'authentic African' and 'difference' that is bought into by the investor needs to stand on its own in the media that is created by Triggerfish - films need to 'feel' different, bringing forth an affective response through the product as well. It is therefore this affective response to 'authenticity' and 'difference' that is essentially commodified, because without this response there is no inherent value in marketing yourself as 'African' (or any other kind of marker for that matter, like being 'BEE certified'). The consumer is buying into the idea about how *they* feel about Africa, just as they do when purchasing a *Fairtrade* product or something that is defined through an identity larger than the product in hand. Again affect sits in the commodification of identity, however nebulous and complex it may seem. Something very similar happens with the way that 'Africa' is also outside of Triggerfish, as portrayed in marketing material.

Outside the Abject of 'Africa'

While Triggerfish sells the idea and feeling of difference through marketing itself as an 'African' animation studio, there is also a strong emphasis on how Triggerfish is able to 'provide opportunities to Africans' in order to represent their ideas and identity on the 'international stage'. 'Giving voice to the voiceless' has been a large focus for Triggerfish over the past five years, with various 'corporate social investment'[30] strategies that have been outlined above. *The Story Lab* was a particularly large investment not only in the immediate population surrounding Triggerfish, but was a 'continent-wide' search for 'the next generation of storytellers', with the support of international media giant *The Walt Disney Company*. 'We are ready to bring a fresh voice to the world," announced Anthony, head of development at Triggerfish (Szalai, 2015).

Gayatri Spivak wrote an important essay in 1988 entitled *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, in which she explores the idea that those who are powerless (the colonised, the poor, and the marginalised of society who do not hold social capital) are always spoken *for* by those in power (either the local authorities or elite, or the global elite like those of the Global North speaking on behalf of the Global South) and therefore never truly heard. It's not entirely a question of whether these marginalised populations are able to speak, but whether they are heard by those in power, and she argues that it is only through allowing them to express their own grievances, experiences and thoughts that these 'subaltern' will be able to be truly represented politically.

Triggerfish places itself both in the identity of the subaltern (previously colonised Africa, outside the Global North), as well as a mediator *between* the subaltern and the Global North in the way that is described in their search for talent outside the company during the *Story Lab* initiative, as well as more recently the *Triggerfish Academy*. In this understanding of 'Africa', the continent is placed outside the walls of the studio, with a highly problematic understanding of talent being the 'rough diamond' that needs to be mined from the continent itself, refined, and then presented to the international market. Mining in South Africa has a

[30] While there is no direct 'about' section of the Triggerfish website, there is a tab entitled 'CSI' which stands for corporate social investment, usually defined as companies building up their immediate communities with various strategies that are meant to enrich the quality of life of the community, ultimately resulting in a better population to draw employees from.

long colonial as well as exploitative history, with companies like De Beers (founded by British Cecil John Rhodes) and Anglo American plc (founded by German Ernest Oppenheimer and funded by UK and US sources) dominating the market, originally firmly entrenched in the colonisation of South Africa in the early 1900's. This well-known history of extraction of wealth from the continent is definitely a poor metaphor to use when comparing Triggerfish's attempts to promote 'African' storytelling to a global market, no matter how well-meaning the current projects are.

Is Triggerfish the same as a colonial, exploitative mining company? I would argue no, there is a far more collaborative process that occurs through the mediation of talent and the media market. There is however a doubling of the term 'Africa' when officially expressed by the company. The way that the marketing of Triggerfish places itself both inside (commodification of 'us' as 'authentically African') *and* outside ('giving voice') needs to be closely examined, as the apparent oxymoron is navigated without contestation at the moment, and the ways that the company both claims 'Africanness' and distances itself from it can be read as misleading or under 'false pretenses'. Being a part of Triggerfish, I don't think that the company intends to consciously remove itself from being a part of the continent, but it is conveyed in subtle ways that bear consequences in how we represent ourselves (that is, Triggerfish) to the world.

The next chapter is written about the global, in that I try and address the questions around who Triggerfish thinks they are selling media to, what is imagined when talking about the 'international market' and the ways that this has been mediated in both service work at Triggerfish as well as the creation of our own original content. I would like to examine here, however, the ways that Triggerfish places itself between the imagined 'local' ('Africa') and 'global', in the way that it distances itself from the voice that we are trying to provide opportunities to.

In *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*, Anna Tsing writes about the extended metaphor of friction, the resistance or force that is created when two objects move against each other. Her fieldsite is in Indonesia where rainforests become a location of contestation between locals and international businesses wanting to cut down the forests for profit, but this

is one example out of many possible connections between the 'global' and the 'local'. "How does one do an ethnography of global connections?" Tsing asks.

> "My answer has been to focus on zones of awkward engagement, where words mean something different across a divide even as people agree to speak. These zones of cultural friction are transient; they arise out of encounters and interactions. They reappear in new places with changing events" (2005:xi).

Fleetingness and encounters described in the passage above are echoes of Kathleen Stewart and Sara Ahmed, talking in their own ways about how an affective view of the world is in the meeting point between entities, which Brian Massumi equates to *experience* (2002). Tsing emphasises the awkwardness of these experiences where difference is emphasised and amplified by expectations of the universal that manifest in the local in uncomfortable ways. To me, Tsing's metaphor of friction goes hand in hand with Stewart, Ahmed and Massumi's understanding of an affective world, with the idea of friction propelling bodies forward into motion providing a satisfying temporal aspect of bodies moving through space. If Triggerfish places itself between the local and the global, then again it sits in the "gap" created by affect, this time at the centre of the periphery, or the periphery of the centre (Nyamnjoh, 2015). To Tsing the "gap" is friction itself, a force that can change and affect both the local and the global in ways that are both transient and permanent. Triggerfish has this ability when choosing to define what exactly 'Africa' is, why it is in the abject, colonised and impoverished, and how this relates to the larger world in general by giving it value that 'Africa' cannot seem to give itself.

Conclusion

As a company, Triggerfish seems to have the ability to define itself both as 'African' and 'not African' in the ways that it chooses to market itself: as the quintessential 'African' product and experience, as well as 'giving opportunity' to the 'Africa' that is outside the bounds of the studio, thus elevating the company above what it is trying to 'give voice' to. I have used the theory of affect to situate the studio between the 'real' and 'imagined' or 'virtual' Africa, as

well as the idea of the 'local' and the 'global'. While the visual image of a gap is concrete and never-changing, in fact the space or divide between both the real/virtual dichotomy as well as the local/global is constantly shifting, favouring one or the other as well as successfully being both at once. The fleetingness of experience dictates that 'Africa' is not a label that can be neatly cut out and stuck to Triggerfish's identity at all times. Instead the definition of 'Africa' is created again and again in the ways that the entity that is the company interacts with the world through interviews, web content, news releases and acceptance speeches for the awards we receive.

'Africa' is in both the local and the global, the real and the virtual, the reification, commodification, or distancing of a perceived 'lack'. There is no malicious attempt at Triggerfish to use the label of 'Africa' to its own ends without any consideration or attempt to honour the continent that it draws inspiration from, but at the moment there is definitely an under-appreciation for how using 'Africa' affects those who interact with the company, whether investors, clients, employees, consumers and audiences, or beneficiaries of the many causes that Triggerfish supports. It is through a more thorough understanding and deliberate use though that we will be able to create a definition of 'Africa' that gives agency and importance to the people that Triggerfish wants to empower.

What this chapter has not explored is what kind of mechanisms *allow* Triggerfish to bridge the divide between real/virtual and local/global. In the next chapter I will discuss this with reference to the service work that we have provided for the Global North, as well as the future service work that the Global North will provide for us. These mechanisms that allow Triggerfish to be both inside and outside 'Africa' at once will become more apparent then.

Chapter 7: The Geopolitics of Imagination: Reflexivity within Global Relationships

Introduction

In the first thematic chapter I showed you the ways that Triggerfish thinks about its working environment, and the expectations that are placed on the employees in their day to day work life, as well as what the company has to do to sustain these expectations, through an economy of care. The second thematic chapter then went on to explain the ways that Triggerfish (both the company and employees) think through what it means to be "African", and produce "African" content. The oxymorons become apparent at close quarters, with Triggerfish navigating being both a 'real' and 'imagined' Africa coterminously, as well as being both inside and outside the imagined borders of 'Africa' when representing the subaltern on the international stage. This final thematic chapter places the neoliberal care economy of Triggerfish and the way that it engages Africa as a commodity, a desire, a future, and a potential that needs to be worked on in the global context of producing media, and what it means to be part of a much larger network of production and consumption. Just as different experiences have emerged in understanding of work expectations, as well as thinking through what it means to produce "African" content, multiple, sometimes conflicting experiences of what it means to provide service work and produce original content in a geopolitical space are able to live side by side.

In his 2012 article *Blinded By Sight*, Francis Nyamnjoh uses the metaphor of blind men examining different parts of an elephant and describing seemingly contradicting interpretations of what they might be touching in front of them. Instead of only one being right and all other individuals being wrong, each and every person is right because they are describing their singular experience as only they can elaborate, but because different parts of the elephant *feel* different, should one not step back and be able to see the whole animal it might seem oxymoronic to be both soft and hard, wrinkled and smooth, hairless and hairy all at the same time. The metaphor of course extends to *all* our experiences, regardless of whether we have the advantage of sight or not. The elephant can be multiple things - if it's "life at Triggerfish", then each experience expressed by participants or myself is important, just as the different understandings of what it means to be an "African" studio producing "African" content. Partial sight is always there, and methodologically this is expressed

through my disclaimers that this dissertation by no means explains fully what it is like to work at Triggerfish, even for the two months in which fieldwork was conducted. I have explained this partiality through what it means to work at Triggerfish, what it is like to think through the content in production, and now would like to illustrate it through the different experiences of providing service work for the UK, as well as creating our own original content.

Border Thinking in Modernity

Near the end of the first focus group[31], I asked "Does anybody else have anything to kind of add, or things you don't think that we've touched, that we should have touched?" The past forty minutes had been spent discussing what we thought African animation was.

"Uhm…" everyone thought.

"Why is it important to define what African animation is?" Someone asked.

Everyone considered it, nodding.

"It's a good question."

The end of lunch signalled that we needed to get back to work however, and the following week a completely different group of people participating in the focus group meant that we needed to re-examine the question of what 'African animation' was, leaving the *why* unanswered explicitly, even though it might have been considered in other ways less directly.

The answer of why '*African*' animation needs to be emphasised specifically was given by the marketing of Triggerfish in the previous chapter: difference was termed a 'value proposition' by Stuart in his business discourse, something that was to be made special and thus marketable by being outside the norm. The common understanding is that "the African market for film and media is negligible [in terms of profitable returns]", and therefore we are marketing to an international audience that is *not* African, looking for something different to themselves. The "non-market in Africa" was something that was discussed during the focus groups and generally taken as fact - India was compared as a developing country that had a strong consumer base of its own media content, and the question was asked "Why don't we have that in Africa?". Someone tried to answer:

[31] January 11th 2018

> "India is… the same size as Africa, it's just that the level of poverty is nowhere comparable. Africa is… almost all the ten worst countries in the world are… in Africa. And I mean, it's just… India has an economy, and it has systems and it's so big and homogenous too. Like one of two… I don't know, languages, but they -"
>
> "It's got a lot of languages," another person interrupts.
>
> "Ja, but they're… Bollywood can play to a big audience, whereas there isn't… Nollywood is just not… it doesn't play to the whole of Africa. Maybe it does in some ways, but in a way that India is economically superior." [excerpt from focus group transcription, 18 January 2018]

The flattening, homogenisation, and complete dismissal of an entire continent as the poorest in the world, not concerned with any kind of media consumption other than a measly attempt from Nollywood that is long considered to be laughably poor in quality compared to its American counterparts is shamefully part of the thinking of most artists at Triggerfish, and definitely is the foundation of the business model that Triggerfish has built itself on, but also tries to fight against. The mission to promote the talent of the continent has always genuinely been one of the cornerstones of the business, and taking on service work was an attempt if not to promote the content of Africa, then the quality of work that can be achieved *by* Africa. "We want to represent the Other," Stuart told me in an interview later that same year - the capital 'O' apparent in his voice.

The themes that Triggerfish battles with in its attempt to embody, represent and champion the rights of 'Africa', echo those of a very long line of anthropological thought around the decolonisation of theory in the continent, and claiming back a legitimate voice that doesn't base itself in a western epistemology or pay lip service to breaking ties with the colonial body of work that thinking is based on. Walter Mignolo and Madina Tlostanova term this as 'border thinking' - an epistemology that takes into account borders of the modern/colonial world, epistemic and ontological borders (Mignolo and Tlostanova, 2006; Mignolo 2013). It is decolonial in nature, and encourages a different way of existence or experience, what the

authors describe as thinking, sensing, and doing. This translates into geo- and body-politics of knowledge drawn on from the thinker on the periphery, looking in on the dominant mode of theorising from the colonial North.

'Border thinking' as a concept introduces the idea of being able to write within a discipline that has been historically oppressive and domineering (anthropology is just one of many that have wrongfully orientalised anyone outside of Europe) but in a way that negates the submission to colonial thinking of anyone within the social elite. While anthropology and other social sciences have a (relatively) long history and large canon of carefully thinking through what it means to be writing from a place of power, or pre-supposed lack of power, Triggerfish doesn't seem to, up until now, properly think through the alienation and orientalism that they project upon an entire continent, while simultaneously being sincerely concerned with the upliftment of communities around them, and proudly representative of the 'anthropos', or 'the other'. In order to move forward properly as a company that wants to interact with an international market, bring difference as something that is marketable, as well as firmly locate themselves within a locality of *being* 'African' and not just selling it, Triggerfish as a company needs to be able to straddle the line, to engage in a decolonial version of 'border thinking' reducing the reification of difference that will allow it to be both part of the international market while not looking like a colonial wolf in sheep's clothing.

Part of what can lead to the perception of colonial wolfishness on Triggerfish's part has been explained in chapter two, and is evident in the thinking of some employees above: the distancing from the continent that they claim to represent can make people think that they really do just want to "extract" the diamond and take it elsewhere for resale. The polishing of diamonds only works one way: there are those that are doing the polishing, and those that are polished. Racial undertones here are strong: it is usually the white person who polishes, and the Black person who is polished. 'Transnational Whiteness' as defined by Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Maryrose Casey and Fiona Nicoll (2008) is a way to understand the defense of western ideologies and the racialisation that happens within phrases such as 'mining the rough diamond'. Chapter 1 of their edited volume, entitled *Redeeming Self: The Business of Whiteness in Post-Apartheid South African Writing* by Tony Simoes da Silva situates white South Africans within the cultural production of 'white virtue' in a

contemporary context - while this is not explicitly expressed at Triggerfish the way that they refer the idea of "diamonds for polishing" underscores a colonial relationship where some people are in a perpetual state of tutelage and others are the knowers who teach.

The other part of that extraction is the image of the company that is projected by others, and claimed by themselves. "The Pixar of Africa", a title that has been used by the media as far back as 2012, is mirrored in the company's intentions. "We want to be the Disney of Africa," Stuart tells me in an interview in 2018. What does it mean to mirror and copy a product of successful capitalism in the Global North? Timothy Mitchell explains this through the generalised myth of a 'serial replication' of modernity, where theorists have located

> 'An original, material reality, a world prior to and apart from all work of replication, difference, antagonism, meaning, management, or imagination, that defines the peculiar metaphysic of modernity.' (2000:19).

Aspiring to being Disney, a monolithic capitalist structure that in many ways is the *humanitas* that Mignolo refers to (the centre, the elite) often implies the renouncement of the periphery to become like the centre, a poor copy that cannot compete with the original because of their elevated power position and capital (financial and social). A better way of claiming this would be, in the words of Mignolo, to use the mediums that colonisers have claimed for themselves, but instead of being subservient to the norm, being mindful of being on the border, and how our experiences are not the same as those who have colonised.

Going back to Mitchell, it is important to understand that "modernity" is not a pluralisation and equalisation of modernities across the world - doing so would negate and dismiss the inequality that is still keenly felt by many societies who are outside of the global North elite (2000, sentiments shared by James Ferguson, 2006). Instead modernity is defined by what it is not, thereby constantly mutating according to the periphery - this gives agency to those on the outside, as modernity is defined by the outside rather than the outside being dictated to (Mitchell, 2000). While acknowledging inequality is important, what Mignolo (2013),

Mitchell (2000) and Ferguson (2006) tend to do though is draw a solid line in between the "Global North" and the "Global South". Ferguson calls Africa the anomaly that needs to also be included in the definitions of globalisation, however different it seems to be (2006), while in Mignolo's writing he doesn't seem to entertain the idea that one might be *anthropos* in one context, while *humanitas* in another (2010). In her ethnography *Friction*, Anna Tsing writes far more complexly about the ways that the global and local interact, where discrete 'capitalisms' do not exist, but rather commodity chains are formed with 'awkward and uneven links', acknowledging inequality even though the links are definitely there (2005). Tsing focuses on 'zones of friction', which arise out of encounters and interaction, which allows for processes of extraction that potentially can work both ways, even though one side might have more apparent social capital or agency. Because these zones are individual and arise and fade through experiences, they only can be a partial viewpoint, but contribute to the global through individual links. I'd like to present two such links at Triggerfish.

Two Zones of International Friction at Triggerfish

The first link is *Zog*, a 25-minute short film created for Christmas Day 2018 on BBC One, which is British in every sense of the word to its audience, and its production company (Magic Light Pictures). A British author writing about princesses, knights and dragons is definitely Eurocentric at a glance, but in the focus groups, artists working on the project as well as partners of Triggerfish couldn't seem to agree whether it was an example of 'African animation' or not. In the original proposal to this research I emphasised the invisibility of the artists who have worked so hard on these Christmas specials over the past five years, the articles they (and I) proudly share on social media that do not mention where the film is made at all - and if they do, then it is with the unfortunate phrase "animation services provided by Triggerfish Animation in Cape Town"[32]. While the screenplay adaptation of the book was written in Los Angeles and some concept art and storyboards were produced outside of the studio, the rest of the *entire* animation process (asset creation, rigging, layout, previsualisation, dressing, VFX, animation, finalling, lighting, rendering and compositing) was done in Cape Town, with one of the directors in house and therefore physically present

[32] Unfortunate in the sense that animation has a double meaning that can refer to the entire genre, or just one part of the process, diminishing the contribution made by Triggerfish.

and working in the studio every day. Triggerfish was entirely responsible for the end visual product on screen, which very few people realise.

In this situation, the artists at Triggerfish who worked on *Zog* are definitely part of Mignolo's *anthropos*, on the periphery, performing the work with very little to none of the credit (the majority of artists' names don't even appear in the TV credits of the film on Christmas day because the list would be too long for programming). Artists are still fiercely proud of their work, and as illustrated in the first thematic chapter, took ownership of their work, contributing actively to the creative process as Dan encouraged them to. Service work is given to Triggerfish because we are cheaper than UK studios, and the quality far surpasses the price-point. We are good value for money, and while there is a professional relationship that has been built with Magic Light, should we not deliver or exceed expectations, they would look elsewhere for the creation of their shorts.

The second link, or project, is *Mama K's Team Four*, an original Netflix series that has been in development since the original concept was one of the projects that won the Story Lab in 2016. Pre-production started at Triggerfish in 2019, an all-female, 'all-African'[33] writer's room was also formed for the series and the project has been lauded as putting Africa on the map in terms of animated children's television content. The show is about four school girls living in a futuristic version of Zambia, who are trained to be superheroes by their mentor, Mama K. While pre-production and writing will happen on the continent, production for the series has been outsourced to a studio in Dublin, Ireland. The reasoning given by producers is that Triggerfish does not have the expertise required to produce a television show, as we do not have the pipeline[34] or tv-show experience currently to support it. "How is it African if it's made by Irish people?" A colleague asks after the meeting where the intentions of production are announced.

"Surely it's misleading to tell people that it's Africa's first animated TV series on Netflix when it isn't even *made* here?"

[33] While I quote the studio in once again collapsing the continent, writers are from South Africa, Kenya, Senegal, Zambia, Nigeria and Ghana.

[34] The pipeline is the method of producing a piece of animation - simply put, which departments are involved at which stages of the process, and the way that data is transferred across departments. Production pipelines vary from project to project, as well as medium (2D or 3D) as well as forms of animation (a feature film pipeline can be very different to a tv series).

Service work is provided at either end of the world, and each time the product is questioned as to whether it is or isn't African by artists and employees at Triggerfish. To anyone else the question is silly - *Zog* is definitely British, and *Mama K's* will be African through and through - but the fact that one of the directors of *Zog* is half Chinese and was brought up in Mpumalanga points to the tip of a cultural iceberg that seems to be able to disguise itself within the vehicle of the final product. An artist raised the question during a focus group:

"But then you could also say, well, if the Chinese make Nike shoes, is that Nike shoe a Chinese product?"
He tries to answer himself in favour of the Asian country:
"It is made in.. it has 'made in China' written on it, so in some way it is, and the Chinese are known for making shoes, you know."

A quick google however confirms that Nike is an American company which outsources manufacturing to factories in multiple, predominantly Asian, countries including China. Is this an attempt to break down the fetishisation of a commodity, as classic Marxist theory would have us believe is a result of capitalism? What does the claim to property represent in the case of *Zog*? And how is this claim different from the desire to be fully involved in the entire process of *Mama K's*, not only the concept creation and pre-production?

There is a definite difference in agency between the two productions. In *Zog*, we were delivering to a client who, although they in turn were delivering to *their* client, had the ultimate say in production, expenditure, and creative decisions. We are just very lucky that such a good relationship has developed, so that Magic Light trusts the directors and the team in Cape Town that they feel they don't need to go over everything with a fine toothed comb. It was definitely their project though, and the geographical distance between them and us as well as their trust in the process softened the feeling that the project was not ours, creating room for ownership and a love of the product that is not necessarily directly apparent when someone watches the film, but it is far better for having love being put into it by those who make it. The directors of *Zog* therefore are responsibilitised through trust and love, which is how affect is mobile and travels up and down the production hierarchy. The fact that the

producers of the film were in London illustrates that affect not only is mobile through hierarchy but across space as well - affect becomes transnational.

In *Mama K's*, Triggerfish, along with the Zambian original creator Malenga Mulendema, have control over the outcome to a certain extent, as ultimately delivery is to Netflix and therefore they need to be happy with the quality and tone of the product that is produced. The concept of superheroes in an African context is not new: *Black Panther* (2018) came out in late January 2018 at the same time that I was conducting fieldwork, and the market for Afrofuturism exploded as a result of the financial success of the Marvel film. What was encouraging with Triggerfish though is that ultimately we *are* an African company as we are located geographically on the continent, and therefore have experiential capital and are able to negate the fantasy of 'Africa' to the international market. The market dictates the label of locality, not the manufacturers, so even though Triggerfish won't be the company making the product to the end, it still is considered to be truly theirs. It turns out though that while there is an acknowledgement that the shoes are *made* in China, Nike is still considered an all-American brand.

Conclusion

There are two sides to the coin, and even more sides to an elephant. Personal experience is one thing, but putting your feet in multiple people's experiences and the way that they see the world can lead to a larger understanding of the flows and dynamics that allow businesses to do the work that they do. Triggerfish has always wanted to hold 'Africa' as a way of upping the prospects for real people, even if the way that they've gone about it isn't always the most thought-out or self-aware. As James Ferguson points out, Africa as a continent really does have it rough, and not acknowledging as such negates the power-dynamics that are so evident in a world that has colonisers and the colonised, where people have tried to hold social and financial capital to the detriment of others (2006). *Mama K's* is for the studio a real step forward as an opportunity for those who are under-represented (especially in the Western market), just as *Zog* is able to represent in a real way the talent of artists who worked on it, even though the subject material doesn't originate from an African country.

Prospects for the continent though are juxtaposed against prospecting in the continent - refining the rough diamond to sell it elsewhere, and not including the internal market in business plans doesn't lend itself to a favourable picture of non-exploitation and genuine consideration of a multi-dimensional, complex and nuanced 'Africa' that is able to represent itself on the world stage and stand proud for *everything* that Africa represents, not only the stereotype. Being a part of Triggerfish I honestly do not believe that this is out of any kind of malice, but rather is an indoctrination to the Global North way of thinking - instead of border thinking, we as a company are overcoming the border through transnational whiteness, with the strange oxymoron of wanting to represent the talent that Africa has but refusing to acknowledge the market or taking into consideration the complexities of wanting to represent such a broad social imaginary.

Mentioned in the previous chapter for their writing on the capitalisation of ethnicity, the Comaroffs have also successfully written on where power is located in the world, what academics do to negate or enforce that power, and the ways that we might be able to combat that. In *Theory from the South*, they locate modernity firmly within Africa as something in its own right to be acknowledged and understood (2012:8), instead of a doppelganger or poor copy of the North from which conventionally it is thought that modernity is derived. Instead, just like other authors of modernity and globalisation, modernity is acknowledged as a concrete abstraction by the Comaroffs, something that is brought about through human activity, but also as 'a reified order of transactable value' (2012:14), just like 'Africa' is a 'reified order of transactable value' to Triggerfish. The Comaroffs argue that instead of looking at the world from the Global North, one should instead understand that the periphery is fast becoming the centre of innovation and flexibility.

Considering the way that Triggerfish and its employees think through the meanings of Africa, the way that service work is engaged with both as service providers and contractors, and the different understandings that Triggerfish can give to 'Africa', it's important to think through what it means to be a 'border thinker', being able to consult, work for, and sell to the Global North while still being able to not disassociate from or cut off where we come from and what we represent: the continent Africa. Going back once more to Nyamnjoh's use of the metaphor of blind men describing an elephant, people can be convinced that their version of reality is

correct to the point of negating other realities felt and experienced. Nymanjoh warns against being ‘blinded by sight’ - anthropologists think that because they are able to ‘see’ better than others, to have insight and an academic understanding, doesn’t always equate to a good thing (2012). Triggerfish and the discipline of anthropology have more in common than might initially be apparent, and as important as it is for anthropology to be reflexive, so too is it important for a company that wants to represent a continent to be reflective and make sure that it is thinking through the connections, multiple angles, and what it means to be truly ‘African’.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

At the beginning of this dissertation I set out to examine the ways affect operates within the social processes of Triggerfish, and how reflexivity is required as a way to understand the way that the business operates. The animation industry is dynamic, creative, and (especially in South Africa, although prevalent the world over) precarious - an exemplar of neoliberal labour that happens today all over the world, the 'information age' and CG animation going hand in hand. While there are definite similarities between any organisational ethnography that focuses on neoliberal labour and this ethnography, I wanted to explain to the reader that affect does more than explain the way that people interact within Triggerfish, but also the way that affect allows the company to negotiate identity and global relationships, not only local ones.

The introduction of my dissertation emphasised the importance of examining the paradox at close quarters, moving beyond the surface oxymoron to understand the inner workings beneath the exterior. In Chapter Two I introduced the context of my dissertation: what animation was, a global historical context of the medium, as well as the particular history of Triggerfish. My methodology followed in Chapter Three, explaining the ways that ethnographic data was gathered, and the specific ethical considerations I had to take into account when conducting this research. Participant observation, interviews (both formal and informal), focus groups, and visual diaries were all used as methods of data collection. Ethically I highlighted the fact that I am deeply entrenched in my fieldsite as a participant and employee of Triggerfish myself. While the ethnography attempts to talk about the company as a whole and not only my personal experiences, it is important to note my entanglement with the study, as well as ways to protect informants in a publicised space.

Chapter Four filled in the theoretical aspects of my research, laying down the contextual foundation of the chapters to come. The epistemological lens 'affect' was discussed, with comparisons of different authors serving as the base for trying to find a more encompassing definition of a slippery concept. I linked this to the concept of reflexivity, arguing that affect's 'sense of self' emphasis was important in understanding the way that reflexivity functions. Care as 'work' as well as a 'life-course' was important to understand for the care-economy at

Triggerfish, as well as Hilgers' understanding of neoliberalism and the way that it applies to anthropology and the western world of media (2011). A small literature review on media studies and the global animation context was also included to contextualise my work academically.

Chapter Five was the first thematic chapter of my dissertation, where I explored what it meant to be a caring company that employs a caring workforce. Affect was mobilised as a way to perform neoliberal governmentality over a workforce without directly exploiting resources, but rather maintaining a balance of care that would positively affect the end product, with employees caring about the work that they did and therefore contributing more effort and time than they were necessarily expected to. "Changing the studio culture" was a way of emphasising and encouraging this caring behaviour and putting the onus on employees rather than those ultimately responsible for the project. While this worked well in the case of *Zog* and there was generally a high morale through the production, this could have the tendency to ignore power dynamics of the production hierarchy, and cause unhappiness should the equilibrium of care change. Neoliberalism functions well within this dynamic and is more sustainable than short term, exploitative solutions.

After looking at the neoliberal environment and the way that affect was used to encourage working practice, Chapter Six followed and examined the way that 'Africa' was used as a product by Triggerfish, explained as a 'value proposition' by Stuart the CEO, as well as the various ways that 'Africa' was considered by employees, and the classification of 'African Animation'. An oxymoron arose in the way that the company both distances itself from as well as associates itself with 'Africa', depending on the circumstances. To investors and potential clients, Triggerfish is very much 'African' as a company that represents and sells difference, while simultaneously placing 'Africa' *outside* of the walls of the studio, as talent needs to be found, refined, and then presented to the world market (making a difference *to* 'Africa'). Anna Tsing's extended metaphor of friction describes the affective social process that allows Triggerfish to do this. I argue that the company needs to be more deliberate in the way that it uses 'Africa' as a marketing tool without alienating itself from the continent at the same time.

Chapter Seven follows as an explanation as to the mechanisms that allow Triggerfish to navigate global business relationships, discussing the ways that modernity and globalisation are understood by anthropologists, and how reflexivity could enable Triggerfish to start thinking about its position globally resulting in more nuanced relationships. *Zog* and *Mama K's Team Four* were used as two examples of projects that, although at face value seem to represent a certain ideology fully (the Global North and the Global South respectively), are actually nuanced and made by a range of people in different contexts that don't allow for full ownership one way or another.

The theme of not being able to divide something easily into its constituent parts, or fully box something as black or white has permeated this ethnography - the thematic chapters, while distinct in content, cannot be read in isolation. To only understand Triggerfish through the employees' experiences, or product that it produces, or the way that it markets itself to the world does a disservice to the other parts of the elephant that do not necessarily look or feel like those that are examined at close quarters. However it is also true that the parts of the metaphorical elephant are limitless, even if it just depends on who is doing the describing. I do not claim to hold the entire picture of animation in Southern Africa, let alone what the full experience of working at Triggerfish brings. While this dissertation is part of my experience of working at Triggerfish, listening to participants and coming to my own conclusions about what the data means, I can only speak for myself and my own experiences. There is so much more research to be done within the animation community fleshing out different themes and ideas that I just simply did not have space for in this thesis.

I wrote this dissertation as a partial fulfillment to my Masters degree, but through the process also hope to contribute something to the way that Triggerfish functions as a company. While projects are finite and content will change, I think it's important to acknowledge the kinds of mediations that go into power dynamics, what motivates artists, and the way that the company has sustained itself through the subliminal idea of care. "Changing the culture" of the studio for the better needs follow-through and sustainability in the studio's ability to make sure that the care economy works, and while I cannot officially comment on the trajectory that the studio has been on in the past three years, the way that *Zog* as a project functioned needs to be understood through the idea of balance. More long-term considerations need to be

concentrated on the way that Triggerfish markets itself as a company, the ways that upliftment and encouragement of the community around the studio happens, and being careful to not alienate ourselves from the continent that we are proud to be a part of. Being self-aware is the first step, and I hope that through this dissertation I can bring awareness to us as a company and collective of artists.

Personally I have grown so much over these past three years, entering the workforce while still continuing my studies at the same time. This ethnographic dissertation has been informed by my growth - personally, professionally, and academically. Being separated from the academic project in a way that has meant I haven't been able to "talk anthropology" every day has affected me both negatively and positively, through imposter's syndrome as well as knowing the originality of my ideas and being able to fully immerse myself in the subject for an extended period of time would give me an added edge to the fulfilment of the project at a deeper level. The limitations of putting my experiences on paper only mean that there is so much more to tell, and I hope that given time I will be able to contribute to the ongoing exploration of what it means to animate at the tip of a continent called 'Africa'.

Addendum H - Visual Diary Briefing for Participants

(Visual) Diary Briefing

Hello and thank you for volunteering to participate in this data collection process! Please note that there is no obligation to follow through even at this point, and you are more than welcome to stop at any part of data collection and even withdraw your material after you have finished. This work is YOURS, and therefore you are more than welcome to either remain anonymous or alternatively put your name to your work if you want to be recognised for your contribution. Below are some questions and answers about what you are volunteering to produce for January and February – in a nutshell it's completely up to you, as long as it doesn't infringe on work time and is able to be shown / given to me at the end of Feb. I can't pay you for your time but am able to reimburse material expenses within reason – just chat to me and we can sort something out.

What kind of (visual) diary should I make?

I've called this a "(visual) diary" because it doesn't necessarily have to be visual – I just thought this medium for artists would be most appealing to them. You are welcome to write a "conventional" diary if you want, as well as write stories, poetry, or any kind of fictional writing that interests you, including a script for a short film. It can be digital or in a physical diary. I've listed some ideas for (visual) diaries below:

- Comic strip
- Digital doodles
- Picking a colour at the end of each day that best describes the mood of the day
- Photographically documenting the outfits you wear to work
- Photo diary
- Self portrait every day that best describes you in that moment
- Sketches of people / situations around you
- Abstract art that describes how you feel / what your day was like / thoughts on animation etc.

Does it have to be serious art / thoughts?

NO! I want you to have as much fun as possible with this – you're helping me out, so I'd like you to at least get some enjoyment out of it. Animation as a film medium allows the freedom of a huge range of expression and emotion, and your diaries are allowed the same freedom. Entries don't have to be pieces of art either – stick figure doodles are completely fine as long as you feel they communicate something. For all I know you could make a cake every week depicting what your feelings about a certain topic are. Feel free to get creative / go the easy way out ☺

What subject matter should I focus on?

I'm less interested in *what* work you do all day (I don't need a list of the shots / assets you worked on) and more *how*, *where* and *why* you work the way you do. My research is looking at African animation, Triggerfish's intercontinental labour relationship, and how you imagine yourself in all of this. Is work boring? Exciting? Why? What do you really like about working at Triggerfish? What do you not like about the animation industry in South Africa? What is working at Triggerfish like? Etc. This can be expressed as abstractly as you want, but should be based on the kind of questions above.

How often should I work on it?

Diaries are traditionally written in every day, and by all means if you want to commit at this level then please feel free to do so. Otherwise you can do Mondays and Fridays (what do I think my week looks like, what was my week actually like), once a week, every other day... whatever works for you. If you need me to remind you about "entries" (for lack of a better word) please let me know and I'm happy to send an email now and again. If you want to be left alone for the entire two months then that's ok too ☺ Bare minimum entries are 2 – one for January and one for February. If you're doing an entry a month, it would be great if you could spend a bit of time on each entry so that they are more detailed than an every-day entry.

Do I need to explain anything in a separate write-up?

NO. What you produce is what you produce, you are more than welcome to explain / write up if you see fit, but this is NOT necessary. JUST your diary is what I'm interested in looking at.

Do I need to attend focus groups if I sign up for the diary?

No. You are more than welcome though, and it might give you food for thought to add to the diary.

Do I get remunerated?

Unfortunately my budget does not extend to paying you for your time, but you will be acknowledged in my dissertation should you want to be. I am able to pay for any materials required within reason. Please either give me a receipt to reimburse you or let me know what you need. Because this is voluntary, please don't stress about it or spend hours on it every day. Make sure you have fun while doing it ☺

If you need any other information please feel free to contact me on any of the below:

Work email: laura.irvine@triggerfish.co.za
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Whatsapp: 082 505 2710

Thank you and have fun!

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