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**The Hero’s Journey and Three Types of Metaphor in Pixar Animation**

Despite the fact that the cinema and animation have common features, one of the fundamental differences between them is that animation uses metaphors much more freely. This current study explores this feature of animation and analyzes how the use of metaphors affects the narrative and plot structure of full- and short-length animation. The study is based on the narrative analysis of eight films made by Pixar Animation Studio, as a successful company that produces both full- and short-length animated films. The concept of monomyth, which was formulated by Joseph Campbell, in 1949, and had a significant impact on the contemporary film industry, allows me to describe the structure of each of the selected examples. Such a formal approach to describing the plot structure, in turn, makes it possible to trace the impact of the extended metaphor on these plots. As a result, this study reveals and describes three main types of creative metaphors in the context of storytelling: supportive, action-forming and destructive. It appears that the supportive metaphor is used in all of the examined films, while action-forming and destructive metaphors relate to short-length animation only. The individual features of using these types of metaphors in full- and short-length animation are revealed in the concluding parts of the research.

**Introduction**

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), describes metaphor as "understanding one kind of thing in terms of another" (p. 5). Although this definition is nominally true for all kinds of metaphor, there is a significant differentiation between CMT and the theory of creative metaphors (Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Goatly, 1997; Kövecses, 2002), since the latter is commonly associated with interaction theory by Black (1979) and blending theory by Fauconnier and Turner (2002). The main difference is that CMT argues about metaphors which are common and easily recognizable, while other theories introduce more complicated metaphors that are invented artificially by human imagination (and are, therefore, creative). Not surprisingly, theories describing creative metaphors are actively used by researchers to analyze art including feature films, video games, cartoons, comics, and animation (see El Refaie, 2003; Forceville and Jeulink, 2011; Potsch and Williams, 2012; Forceville and Renckens, 2013; Fahlenbrach, 2016). However, conceptual and creative metaphors are not distinctly separated from each other. Researchers argue that creative metaphors can be derived from the conceptual ones: for example, Lakoff and Turner (1989), claim that "a surrealist poem might take a conventional image-mapping and depart from it" (p. 95), while Knowles and Moon (2005), state that creative metaphors "may be based on pre-existing ideas or images" (p. 4).

The present study examines how metaphors (both conceptual and creative) influence the narrative of animation films primarily in terms of plot structure, but also regarding characterization, focalization, and coherence (Genette, 1980). Particular attention is paid to the narrative’s thematic coherence, or "thematic isotopy" (Pimentel, 1990, p. 55). Thematic coherence is the key attribute of a narrative in the context of metaphor, because deriving the abstract cumulative theme from a concrete plot event is a process quite similar to metaphorization. Existing pieces of research show that many literary works contain extended metaphor, or "mega-metaphor" (as coined by Werth (1999)), related to the text’s main theme, which produces a net of interconnected metaphors scattered throughout the text. While the mega-metaphor "integrates the immediate figurative context with the moving of a narrative as a whole" (Yacobi, 2011, p. 127-28), these interconnected metaphors provide "effects of meaning" that are "of a cumulative nature, yet single in their global effect" (Pimentel, 1990, p. 36). As I will show further, the mega-metaphor is usually conceptual, whereas the metaphors located throughout a literary text or an animation film plot are creative, and they form different parts of a world where the story unfolds. As Sinding (2011), states, in order to make complex ("storyworld") metaphors understandable, "authors may motivate them by basing them on conventional metaphors, however unconventional the spatialization may be" (p. 243).

Since this study focuses on the influence of metaphors on the narrative of animated films, and primarily on their plot structure, it is important to list the works related to this topic. There are a few studies that come close to this theme, discussing metaphors in animation (Hannibal, 2017; Forceville and Paling, 2018), or even metaphors and their influence on a narrative in animation (Forceville and Jeulink, 2011; Chiu and Chu, 2019). However, none of them seriously touches upon the theme of plot structure. Moreover, leaving aside the theme of metaphor, animation plot structure is not researched well enough, itself.

The main reason here is that when it comes to storytelling and story structure, researchers do not look at animation separately: animated movies are considered as a subspecies of cinema in this context. For example, Gulino (2004), analyzes both cinema and animation to describe a universal eight-sequence scheme of a film script without making any distinctions between them.

At the same time, animation is widely discussed as an independent art form (see Wells, 1998). Having explored many definitions of animation, Husbands and Ruddell (2019), highlight key features that distinguish animation from other visual arts, such as cinematography. These include "The illusion of life and metamorphosis" (p. 8), which implies that an inanimate object can be represented alive, and one object’s image can be seamlessly transformed into another by means of animation. The listed distinctions give animation authors more freedom. This is the freedom to choose unique images and transform them, and also the freedom to use metaphors, because "the characteristic of an effective metaphor is it borrows an image from one schema of ideas, and applies it to another, previously unrelated schema" (Forty, 2000, p.100). Metaphor is not only a part of the visual representation; it is a part of the story. Consequently, the storytelling techniques that are used in cinematography must be studied separately in the context of animated films, at least in the perspective of the ways that metaphor is used in them.

Moreover, short-length animated films, like short-length feature films, need to be analyzed separately from full-length ones. The limitations on the timing inevitably affect the dramaturgy, so that "a short film differs as much from a feature as a short story does from the novel" (Cowgill, 2005, p.10). Despite this, there are few works that address the specifics of the dramaturgy of short-length films. These include, for example, Raskin (2002), studying a number of successful short-length films, as well as the work by Cooper and Dancyger (2012), which draws parallels between short-length films and literature, with a focus on metaphorization as their key common feature. A similar approach to film and literature comparison is presented in the study by Novikova and Timofeyeva (2016). There are also industry professionals that offer advice for aspiring filmmakers, such as Roberta (2009), in the book "How Not to Make a Short Film: Secrets from a Sundance Programmer". However, such books cannot be referred to as full-scale scientific research. As for works on the specifics of the dramaturgy of short-length animated films, like the research made by Khalili (2018), exploring story structure in short comedic animation, they are almost impossible to find because of the narrow subject area.

The aim of this study is to analyze how metaphor affects contemporary animated films’ narrative and plot structures. To do this, I first select a set of full- and short-length animated films. Then, I examine each of the selected animated films, in the context of a universal hero’s journey scheme, revealing their inner structure. I also find one mega-metaphor and a few creative metaphors, produced by this mega-metaphor, in each of these films. After that, I analyze whether the mega-metaphor and other metaphors affect the narrative and plot structure, and if so, in which way. It should be noted that the current study does not aim to identify all the metaphors used in the selected animated films (this task is too difficult, if not impossible): instead, it focuses on discovering certain types of metaphors that have a similar effect on the narrative and story structure, outlining common ways of their impact.

This research focuses exclusively on cartoons produced by Pixar, and this is no coincidence. Pixar has long been considered "the most successful creative enterprise ever and one of the most profitable" (Satell, 2015). The company's animated films are well-known worldwide, and, by 2020, its projects have collected a total of "over $14 billion at the global box office" (Bean, 2020), received rave reviews from the critics and claimed prestigious prizes from Golden Globe to Academy Award. It is also important that, in addition to full-length animation, Pixar is seriously engaged in making short films. In spite of the fact that short animation does not actually have a clear distribution scheme, the company continues to evolve in this direction, considering this product as an image one. That is why Pixar cartoons are ideal material for my research.

**Materials and Methods**

***Content Selection***

I chose three full- and five short-length animated films of the Pixar Animation Studio for the analysis. Cartoons, which are extensions of the already running franchises, were not selected because strict adherence to the existing concept may limit the authors’ imaginations. At the same time, the most commercially successful and freshest projects of the studio were chosen. Based on the box office data, I selected "Inside Out" (2015) and "Coco" (2017). Their box office earnings were 857 and 799 million dollars respectively (Bajgrowicz, 2020), with critics calling "Inside Out" "a flat-out masterpiece" and a "burst of pure imagination" (Travers, 2015), and "Coco" – "one of the most impressively animated films ever" (O’Hara, 2018). I also decided to analyze the film "Onward" (2020), as it is the studio's latest project at the time of this study’s commencement (October 2020). I must mention that its results at the box office cannot be compared with the results of other projects of the studio; the coronavirus pandemic, which became a worldwide issue in early 2020, scared away many potential viewers. Nevertheless, it was still considered to be "Pixar’s best film in years" (Rose, 2020), by some of the critics. I also included into this research five of Pixar’s independent short projects (projects which are not part of any other franchise) that are of particular interest: "Partly Cloudy" (2009), "The Blue Umbrella" (2013), "Lava" (2014), "Sanjay’s Super Team" (2015), and "Piper" (2016).

***Method’s Theoretical Basis***

The structural approach to the study of narrative is based on the works of Saussure (1916/2011), who divided the language sign into "signifier" and "signified", and the studies of Shklovsky (1919; 1925/1990), who found repeated motifs in the fairy tales of different nations and recurrent devices of storytelling used by different writers. Propp (1928/1968) further developed these ideas, analyzing a large number of fairy tales and deriving their universal scheme. Works of Russian Formalists, in turn, had an influence on the structural approach in comparative mythology (for example, see Lévi-Strauss, 1955). Joseph Campbell, who studied myths and religious texts of the peoples of the world, is now one of the most famous researchers in comparative mythology, due to the extreme popularity of his study, "The Hero with a Thousand Faces” (1949). This work is based on Jung's theories of archetypes (1934-55/1959), which means that it has a psychological basis.

Campbell's research resulted in the universal scheme of the hero’s journey, or the monomyth, that had a significant impact on world art, especially on cinematography. In particular, it was Campbell's works that formed the basis of the first Star Wars trilogy, as George Lucas admitted (Moyers, 1998), and became the framework of Christopher Vogler’s studies (including the book "The Writer’s Journey. Mythic Structure for Writers" (2007)), which were actively used by the Walt Disney Company for their animation films’ plot construction. In his research paper, "Joseph Campbell Goes to the Movies: The Influence of the Hero’s Journey in Film Narrative" (2017), Vogler links Campbell’s work directly to the research by Propp (1928/1968), stating that Campbell’s "system resembles Propp’s “functions” derived from the analysis of structural elements in Russian fairy tales" (p. 13). Due to its convenience in analyzing the structure of a story, the monomyth scheme is now used not only in the film industry and books about storytelling, but also in contemporary academic discourse concerning narrative analysis: for example, see the works by Palumbo (2004; 2008; 2013) or Cruz & Kellam’s study "Restructuring structural narrative analysis using Campbell’s monomyth to understand participant narratives" (2017).

In the present work, I use Campbell’s monomyth in the same way as an instrument for structural narrative analysis, namely to reveal the plot structure of all the selected animation films.

***Method’s Description***

Campbell's monomyth scheme includes sixteen stages. I will briefly list and number them here for future reference. At first, the hero hears The Call to Adventure (1), but rejects it (Refusal of the Call) (2). Then, with some kind of Supernatural Aid (3), The Crossing of the First Threshold (4) happens, and the hero goes on a journey. After that, the hero is swallowed and immediately enters The Belly of the Whale (5): an unknown and dangerous place. The hero is then taken on The Road of Trials (6), culminating in The Meeting with the Goddess (7). The image of the hero's bride or mother can be embodied in this godlike character (at this stage, the hero may even be tempted to abandon the journey). It is followed by Atonement with the Father (8) and Apotheosis (9): the moment of symbolic death and revival of the hero. At the end of the journey, the hero receives The Ultimate Boon (10) and may even refuse to return to their own world (Refusal of the Return) (11). However, with the power of The Magic Flight (12), and/or Rescue from Without (13), The Crossing of the Return Threshold happens (14). As a result of his journey, the hero becomes Master of the Two Worlds (15) and gains Freedom to Live (16).

This scheme, with stage numbers, is used to analyze all of the chosen examples. In each story, the events that corresponded to the stages of the original scheme are highlighted. After that, the original stage numbers are written out in the order in which they are presented in the story. Next, I identify a key theme (or themes) of the film, as well as an associated mega-metaphor, which provides the story’s thematic coherence. Finally, I highlight a few creative metaphors scattered throughout the plot that were formed by this mega-metaphor.

***Procedure***

To make it clear how exactly the analysis is carried out, I will show the analysis of one full- and one short-length film based on the traditional monomyth stages’ numbers from the "Method’s Description" section.

The full-length film, "Coco" (2017), tells a story about Miguel, a Mexican boy who dreams of becoming a musician. It seems that his dreams will never come true because music is forbidden in Miguel’s family. One day, Miguel finds out about the talent show (1), which will be held on the Day of the Dead. He cannot dare to go against his family (2) until he finds out that the famous musician, Ernesto de la Cruz, probably was his ancestor (3). Having escaped from his family (4), Miguel accidentally enters the world of the dead (5), where he meets his forefathers. Now, his task is to return to the world of the living before dawn. Together, with a dead man named Hector, Miguel goes through many trials (6) to meet the great Ernesto de la Cruz (7). However, after this meeting, it turns out that Miguel's real ancestor is Hector (8), while Ernesto de la Cruz is a deceiver, who killed Hector to take his place. Ernesto de la Cruz tries to destroy Miguel and Hector as witnesses to his crime (9), but the heroes are rescued by Miguel’s great-great-grandmother, Imelda (13). They escape from the cave, where they were entrapped by de la Cruz (12). As a result, the heroes manage to expose de la Cruz and bring fame back to Hector (10). Then Miguel has to leave his ancestors to return to his world (11, 14). Using the knowledge gained in the world of the dead, Miguel returns harmony to his family and restores the good memory of Hector to the world of the living (15). In addition, he persuades his family to allow him to practice music (16). Thus, the plot scheme for "Coco" looks like this: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 12, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16.

There are several key themes greatly significant for "Coco": memory, death, family, and music (talent). All of them resonate together in the culmination, when Miguel sings a song, "Remember Me", to his great-grandmother, Coco, making her remember her father Hector and, thereby, saving him from ceasing to exist in The World of the Dead. Although it is difficult to unequivocally identify the most important one of these themes, there is an evident mega-metaphor that is directly linked to two of them (memory and death): *"OBLIVION IS DEATH"*. This is a conceptual metaphor, as the association of oblivion with death is traditional in human perception and in the cultures of many countries, including Mexico. The script writers use this conceptual (and therefore intuitive) metaphor to create a series of creative (more complex) metaphors throughout the story: for example, *"THE WORLD OF THE DEAD IS THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF THE LIVING"*, *"A SKELETON IS A PERSON REMEMBERED"*, *"A PHOTO ON A FAMILY ALTAR IS A PASS",* and so on.

In the short film, "Partly Cloudy" (2009), the Cloud creates dangerous creatures and passes them on to a Stork, to deliver them to people on Earth. Initially, the Cloud creates a crocodile (1), and the Stork agrees to take it away (4). Then, the Cloud creates a few more dangerous creatures, and the situation becomes more complicated (6) until the Stork escapes to a safer cloud. The Cloud weeps, because he thinks that his friend has betrayed him (9). Eventually, however, it turns out that the Stork took the protective clothing from that cloud (10) to deliver creatures more efficiently. The Cloud and the Stork are happy to be together again and their dangerous adventures continue (16). Thus, the plot scheme for " Partly Cloudy" looks like this: 1, 4, 6, 9, 10, 16.

A short film usually does not have time to unfold as many themes as a full-length film, so they are easier to identify. The main theme of this animated film is, obviously, friendship, so the mega-metaphor associated with this theme might be formulated as *"FRIENDSHIP IS A CHALLENGE"* (it is also a conceptual metaphor). Just as in a full-length film, there are creative metaphors emerging from the mega-metaphor and describing the characters and the world around them (*"A CLOUD IS A FRIEND"*, for example). However, as I will show further, the most interesting of these is the metaphor that describes the concrete action: *"DELIVERING DANGEROUS CREATURES IS MAKING SACRIFICES FOR FRIENDSHIP"*.

**Results**

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 1 (for full-length films) and Table 2 (for short-length films) [Tables are placed after References]. The "Metaphor type" column contains one of three creative metaphor types, revealed in this study, in the context of storytelling: supportive, action-forming and destructive. Each of them will be explained and discussed in the next section.

**Discussion**

***Three Types of Creative Metaphor***

Supportive metaphor is a creative metaphor that refers to a part of a fictional world. It can define, for example, the location where the events unfold, or the image of the hero themself. However, it does not limit the plot to one specific action that the hero has to perform. Supportive metaphor is most applicable for full-length animated films, because the world built within them is usually quite complex, and the goal of the hero requires many different specific actions and can change dramatically throughout the story. For example, in "Coco" metaphors, *"THE WORLD OF THE DEAD IS THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF THE LIVING"* and *"A SKELETON IS A PERSON REMEMBERED"*, are very important for the plot and for the world of the story. However, they are supportive, because the specific actions of the hero cannot be fully predetermined by them, and the goal of the hero is complex and varies throughout the story: to play music professionally; to meet Ernesto de la Cruz; to restore justice and the good memory of Hector; to return home, and so on.

In short-length animation, one of the creative metaphors is usually action-forming. This means that the only specific action of the hero, on the way to his goal, can be fully described by this metaphor. For example, the metaphor *"DELIVERING DANGEROUS CREATURES IS MAKING SACRIFICES FOR FRIENDSHIP"* defines the only specific action that the Stork performs in "Partly Cloudy": delivering dangerous creatures. The action-forming metaphor also grows out of the mega-metaphor, but, unlike the supportive one, it severely limits the hero and would be redundant for a full-length movie. In short-length animation, on the contrary, this restriction helps to build a well-structured plot around one specific idea that the authors want to convey. Therefore, it could be said that, in short-length animation, a hero is a carrier of metaphor.

Destructive metaphor is an even stronger tool for the author. It is a creative metaphor that implies the existence of external forces, that perform key actions instead of the hero. For example, in "The Blue Umbrella", street objects rescue a helpless blue umbrella when it finds itself on the busy road, illustrating the idea that lovers (the blue and red umbrellas), are destined to be together ("*STREET OBJECTS ARE DESTINY*"). So, the key trial is passed by the external forces, while, in a full-length film, it would probably be passed by the hero himself. In "Lava", the hero is saved by his beloved, who sings a song about her belief in love that creates a heart of fire ("*THE HEART OF FIRE IS THE POWER OF BELIEF*"). This heart lifts the volcano from the bottom of the ocean, from where he could not move. In "Sanjay's Super Team", the hero is protected by ancient gods, in the image of superheroes, who save him from evil demons ("*GODS ARE SUPERHEROES*"). In all the examples above, the destructive metaphor is an addition to, not a substitute for, the action-forming metaphor.

***Metaphor and Narrative***

Table 1 and table 2 [Tables are placed after References] allow me to trace how certain types of creative metaphors affect the narrative in general, and the structure of the plot, in particular.

Supportive metaphor certainly has a significant effect on the world construction and characterization. As Eder (2010), states, some characters of the fictional world "may be understood to be the vehicle of general thematic statements" (p.32), due to "metaphorical connections" (p.33). In full-length animation, this statement may refer to supporting characters (like skeletons in "Coco") or even to main characters (like emotions in "Inside Out"). In both cases, it is the metaphor that defines key features (common behavioral patterns, habits, dreams, fears, and so on) of the characters that are connected with the story’s theme by a chain: character -> creative (supportive) metaphor -> mega-metaphor -> theme.

However, the supportive metaphor does not violate the usual plot structure in any way, as it refers only to characterization, external scenery and circumstances. In spite of the fact that some neighboring stages change places, it is obvious that the scheme of monomyth is preserved in all three examples of Pixar full-length animation that use supportive metaphor. In that case, I tend to agree with Popova's assertion, that was originally made about literary texts: "the narrative elements of plot, causally linked events, and characters’ goals are dependent but not reducible to the meanings created by the metaphor. It is more appropriate to say that the meaning of the metaphors is functional, with respect to the plot, not that metaphorical structuring takes over the narrative" (Popova, 2015, p. 114). However, this is not the case with short-length animation films.

In short-length animation, supportive metaphors operate in exactly the same way as in full-length animation, but, in addition to these, there is usually an action-forming metaphor. Unlike the former, the latter not only defines the characterization of the hero, but also restricts his potential freedom and, therefore, takes over the narrative. As a consequence, the scheme of monomyth is presented in a truncated form (notably, three of the five analyzed films even lack the "Refusal of the Call" (2) stage, which implies an initial refusal to act). For example, the "Partly Cloudy" plot consists of six stages instead of sixteen, because the chosen metaphor and the action of the hero, which is defined by that metaphor, do not imply a long and deep development of the story. Despite this, there are examples where the action-forming metaphor coexists with the traditional scheme of monomyth. For example, in "Piper", a short-length animated film about a little bird trying to overcome the fear of a big sea wave, there are thirteen monomyth stages of the sixteen. This means that the action-forming metaphor may imply a full-fledged journey of the hero, represented in the traditional monomyth scheme.

The destructive metaphor interferes with the hero’s journey even more strongly. The traditional monomyth assumes that the hero passes all tests on their own, and receives "The Ultimate Boon" (10) as a reward. However, external interference can break the classical structure and deprive the hero of the opportunity to pass the key challenges on their own (this plot device is also well-known as "deus ex machina"). Interestingly, the traditional monomyth scheme includes the stage "Rescue From Without" (13) that describes the hero's rescue by external forces. However, it is important that such a rescue takes place after the hero has already passed "The Road of Trials" (6) and other challenges, so it only helps the hero to return to the ordinary world. Destructive metaphor threatens the classical structure, because the "Rescue From Without" (13) seeks to replace other stages before the hero gets "The Ultimate Boon" (10), as the external forces perform key actions for the hero.

Despite this, if skillfully used, a destructive metaphor can be built into the traditional plot structure, and the scheme of monomyth will be saved. This is proved by the example of "Sanjay's Super Team", where gods, in the guise of superheroes, interfere with the stage "The Road of Trials" (6). Authors build the story in such a way that, despite the help from the outside, the hero is constantly threatened by danger, and performs the key move which leads to the victory over the demons. As a result, the hero's journey in "Sanjay's Super Team" corresponds to the traditional scheme of monomyth and contains thirteen stages of the sixteen.

Regarding such an aspect of narrative as focalization, the logic and ways of applying this term to the visual arts (films, animation, graphic novels) is complex and debatable (see Hühn, Schmid & Schönert, 2009; Horstkotte & Pedri, 2011; Mikkonen, 2012). Obviously, none of the above types of creative metaphor affect focalization directly, as a creative metaphor is rather a tool to organize the world of a story that could possibly be told in different ways. Nevertheless, destructive metaphor works in a special way and can change not the focalization itself, but the object of the focalization, temporarily shifting attention from the main to secondary characters. As for mega-metaphor, it may reveal the theme (or themes) of the story and its underlying idea. In that case, all related creative metaphors work together, to bring the voice of the author (narrator) into the film implicitly and attempt to connect the viewer and the author through the film on an "extratextual level" (Kuhn, 2009, p. 261). However, it still hardly brings any change to focalization, per se.

**Conclusion**

The aim of the study was to analyze how the use of metaphors affects full- and short-length animation films’ narrative and plot structure. In the course of analysis of three full-length and five short-length animated films by Pixar Animation Studio, I revealed how the thematic coherence of an animated film’s narrative is achieved through the use of metaphors. The key theme of an animated film is directly linked to a conceptual mega-metaphor, which generates a network of interconnected creative metaphors scattered throughout the story. I identified three types of such creative metaphors and studied their impact on the narrative and plot structure. The supportive metaphor is applicable for both full- and short-length animated films, but it does not directly affect the story structure, although it has a significant effect on characterization and world-building. The action-forming and destructive metaphors are applicable for short-length animated films only and have a significant impact on their structure: the traditional scheme of monomyth is often presented in a truncated form. However, the use of these types of metaphors does not necessarily mean a transformation of the traditional scheme of monomyth, but only leads to this trend.

It should be noted that this study focuses only on the usage of metaphors in the context of storytelling and on the examples of animated films of one particular studio. Studying how metaphor can influence the narrative in other visual arts, as well as in animation projects of other studios, could be seen as a task for future pieces of research.

Disclosure statement

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Table 1. Monomyth stages and metaphors in Pixar full-length animation films.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Film title, year | Monomyth stages | Mega-metaphor | Creative metaphors (examples) | Metaphor type |
| Inside Out (2015) | 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 9; 8; 10; 11; 12; 13; 14; 15; 16 | *MIND IS A WORLD* | *LIVING CREATURES ARE EMOTIONS* | Supportive |
| *DREAMS ARE CINEMA* | Supportive |
| *ORBS ARE MEMORIES* | Supportive |
| Coco (2017) | 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 13; 12; 10; 11; 14; 15; 16 | *OBLIVION IS DEATH* | *THE WORLD OF THE DEAD IS THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF THE LIVING* | Supportive |
| *A SKELETON IS A PERSON REMEMBERED* | Supportive |
| *A PHOTO ON A FAMILY ALTAR IS A PASS* | Supportive |
| Onward (2020) | 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 7; 6; 9; 10; 11; 8; 12; 13; 14; 15; 16 | *LIFE IS A GAME* | *JOURNEY IS A ROLE-PLAYING GAME QUEST* | Supportive |
| *TAVERN IS A GAME LOCATION* | Supportive |
| *RUINS ARE A DRAGON* | Supportive |
| Original monomyth stages: 1 – The Call to Adventure; 2 – Refusal of the Call; 3 – Supernatural Aid; 4 – The Crossing of the First Threshold; 5 – The Belly of the Whale; 6 – The Road of Trials; 7 – The Meeting with the Goddess; 8 – Atonement with the Father; 9 – Apotheosis; 10 – The Ultimate Boon; 11 – Refusal of the Return; 12 – The Magic Flight; 13 – Rescue from Without; 14 – The Crossing of the Return Threshold; 15 – Master of the Two Worlds; 16 – Freedom to Live. | | | | |

Table 2. Monomyth stages and metaphors in Pixar short-length animation films.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Film title, year | Monomyth stages | Mega-metaphor | Creative metaphors (examples) | Metaphor type |
| Partly Cloudy (2009) | 1; 4; 6; 9; 10; 16 | *FRIENDSHIP IS A CHALLENGE* | *DELIVERING DANGEROUS CREATURES IS MAKING SACRIFICES FOR FRIENDSHIP* | Action-forming |
| The Blue Umbrella (2013) | 1; 4; 5; 6; 13; 9; 10; 14; 15; 16 | *LOVE IS A DESTINY* | *ESCAPING TO THE BUSY STREET IS MAKING SACRIFICES FOR LOVE* | Action-forming |
| *STREET OBJECTS ARE DESTINY* | Destructive |
| Lava (2014) | 1; 6; 9; 13; 10; 16 | *BELIEF IS A NATURAL POWER* | *SINGING IS BELIEVING IN LOVE* | Action-forming |
| *THE HEART OF FIRE IS THE POWER OF BELIEF* | Destructive |
| Sanjay’s Super Team (2015) | 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 7; 13; 6; 10; 14; 8; 15; 16 | *RELIGION IS AN UNNATURAL POWER* | *FIGHTING ALONGSIDE SUPERHEROES IS GETTING A RELIGIOUS ENLIGHTENMENT* | Action-forming |
| *GODS ARE SUPERHEROES* | Destructive |
| Piper (2016) | 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 9; 10; 14; 8; 15; 16 | *WORLD IS A SEA* | *LEARNING HOW TO COPE WITH HYDROPHOBIA IS GROWING UP* | Action-forming |
| Original monomyth stages: 1 – The Call to Adventure; 2 – Refusal of the Call; 3 – Supernatural Aid; 4 – The Crossing of the First Threshold; 5 – The Belly of the Whale; 6 – The Road of Trials; 7 – The Meeting with the Goddess; 8 – Atonement with the Father; 9 – Apotheosis; 10 – The Ultimate Boon; 11 – Refusal of the Return; 12 – The Magic Flight; 13 – Rescue from Without; 14 – The Crossing of the Return Threshold; 15 – Master of the Two Worlds; 16 – Freedom to Live. | | | | |