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**Visual techniques for storytelling**

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## **Abstract**

This work aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the existing classification systems of the story archetypes, various visual techniques. The research question is how certain visual techniques can help better convey the story and improve visual storytelling skills of the artists in the area of animation. As part of the project, I created a lyric video which incorporates multiple visual techniques for a song that has distinct story archetype. In the first chapter I provide an overview of what an archetype of the story is, what are some of the classification systems and what are their methods and approaches to the archetype are. In the second part I describe what are visual techniques, as well as give a detailed description of some of them, including possible use cases and outcomes. In the last chapter I provide the example of practical application of the overviewed visual techniques based on the music video that I created, as well as reflect on how those particular techniques help support the story in the song.

*Keywords:* Visual Storytelling, Story Archetype, Visual Technique, Animation, Typography, Music Video

## **Introduction**

Before beginning any story-based creative work, especially in the visual field, one must do proper research on what is the story they want to tell about, what are its distinctive elements and how they will be perceived by the audience. On top of that, one must be familiar with possible solutions and methods on how to accomplish their creative work.

Although there has been many researches in the area of storytelling and archetypes of stories by such authors as Georges Polti, Ronald B. Tobias and others, and there have been some researches in the area of visual techniques, there is very little research on how these two work together.

How can colour, composition, camera or subject movement impact the believability of or an immersion in the story, how small tweaks of each individual visual component can lead audience in the direction of one or other archetype and how to effectively use visual techniques to achieve best results when creating visual work?

In this work I carefully examined both the narrative and the visual strategies used in the creative visual work as part of my research and answered these questions. Using the knowledge I had gathered during this process, I created a music video that demonstrates the use of the described visual techniques for the selected narration.

## **Classification systems for the archetypes of the stories**

### **Archetype of the story**

An archetypal structure refers to a recurring and universally recognized pattern or framework that appears in various forms across different cultures, myths, and narratives (Campbell, 2008). These structures are fundamental and often symbolic, representing shared human experiences, characters, or themes that resonate across time and cultures. Archetypal structures serve as templates or molds upon which stories, myths, and legends are built, providing a familiar and resonant foundation for audiences.

Archetypal structures are not rigid templates but rather flexible frameworks that storytellers can adapt and modify to suit their specific narratives (Tobias, 2011). They provide a shared cultural and psychological language through which audiences can connect with and understand the underlying themes of a story.

### **Archetype classification systems**

There are several classification systems for archetypes, each offering a different perspective on the fundamental patterns found in stories, myths, and cultures. Some of the notable classification systems include:

- *The 36 Dramatic Situations* by Georges Polti: by analyzing more than 1200 works from various sources, G. Polti was able to classify 36 distinctive archetypes of story (Polti, 1921).
- *20 Master Plots* by Ronald B. Tobias: by analyzing both patterns of story *and* character, Tobias was able to distinguish 20 various combinations that form core of the story (Tobias, 2011).

- *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories* by Christopher Booker: after completing a 34-year research, C. Booker narrowed the foundation of most of the stories into seven possible archetypes (Booker, 2006).

In the following chapters I will give an overview of the mentioned literature on classification systems and will outline their main characteristics.

### ***The 36 Dramatic Situations***

“36 Dramatic Situations” is the name of a theory proposed by the Frenchman Georges Polti in *The 36 Dramatic Situations*. After analyzing and cataloguing more than 1,200 works, G. Polti was able to form a theory, according to which there exist, for any type of scenario, 36 basic dramatic situations (Polti, 1921). Polti's work was inspired by those of the Italian Carlo Gozzi (1720-1806) and the German Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832).

The book presents thirty-six dramatic situations with, for each, the roles or “indispensable dynamic elements” that it implies, for example, the Supplication situation requires a Persecutor, a Suppliant and a power in authority, whose decision is doubtful (Polti, 1921). Although the exact definition of *dramatic situation* is not given in the book, the situations themselves are detailed in nuances (“The suppliant appeals to the power in authority for deliverance from the persecutor”) and for each nuance examples are given from the theater, tales, novels of all eras and continents, and even from real life. In fact, Polti claims in his introduction to have not only identified all the possible dramatic situations in the theater, but also all the emotions that make up life.

Situations are not, however, clear-cut categories since certain nuances of one situation can affect another situation (Polti, 1921). For example, “increasing the horror” of Situation 27 “Discovery of the dishonour of a loved one” with Situation 3 “Crime pursued by vengeance” and will create a situation 4 “Vengeance taken for kin

upon kin”. Same goes with Situations 15 “Murderous adultery” and 25 “Adultery”. Furthermore, the same work can be classified in two distinct situations, for example Polti (1921) places Hamlet in both Situation 4 and Situation 13.

Table 1 provides the summary of the situations listed in the book; the original list, however, has more details about the characters involved and their intentions.

**Table 1**

*Summary of the Situations From The 36 Dramatic Situations (Polti, 1921)*

No.	Name	Necessary elements	Description
1	Supplication	A persecutor; a suppliant; a power in authority, whose decision is doubtful	The suppliant seeks the mercy of those in control, hoping for protection against their oppressor.
2	Deliverance	An unfortunate; a threatener; a rescuer	The unfortunate one's actions have led to a dispute, with the menace poised to enact retribution. However, a saviour intervenes to rescue the unfortunate.
3	Crime pursued by vengeance	A criminal; an avenger	A criminal engages in unlawful acts without facing repercussions, prompting a vigilante to exact revenge on behalf of justice.
4	Vengeance taken for kin upon kin	Guilty Kinsman; an Avenging Kinsman; remembrance of the Victim, a relative of both	Conflict arises between the Guilty and the Avenging Kinsmen, both connected to the Victim, over an act of wrong.
5	Pursuit	Punishment; a fugitive	A fugitive escapes retribution for a misinterpreted altercation.
6	Disaster	A vanquished power; a victorious enemy or a messenger	After suffering defeat, the once-dominant force loses its status, either by directly confronting a triumphant foe or receiving news of its downfall through a herald.
7	Falling prey to cruelty/misfortune	An unfortunate; a master or a misfortune	The unfortunate one endures hardship, either due to bad luck or the actions of a superior.
8	Revolt	A tyrant; a conspirator	Against a tyrant's oppressive rule, a plotter schemes for overthrow.
9	Daring enterprise	A bold leader; an object; an adversary	A courageous leader successfully claims an item from an opponent through sheer force.
10	Abduction	An abductor; the abducted; a guardian	The kidnapper abducts the person from their guardian.
11	The enigma	A problem; an interrogator; a seeker	An inquisitor challenges the Seeker with a question, enhancing the Seeker's ability to achieve their objective.
12	Obtaining	A Solicitor & an adversary who is refusing OR an arbitrator & opposing parties	The solicitor is at odds with the Adversary, who refuses to give the solicitor an object in the possession of the Adversary, or an arbitrator

No.	Name	Necessary elements	Description
			decides who gets the Object desired by opposing parties.
13	Enmity of kin	A Malevolent Kinsman; a Hated or a reciprocally-hating Kinsman	The Malevolent Kinsman and the Hated or a second Malevolent Kinsman conspire together.
14	Rivalry of kin	The Preferred Kinsman; the Rejected Kinsman; the Object of Rivalry	The Object of Rivalry chooses the Preferred Kinsman over the Rejected Kinsman.
15	Murderous adultery	Two Adulterers; a Betrayed Spouse	Two Adulterers conspire to kill the Betrayed Spouse.
16	Madness	A Madman; a Victim	The Madman goes insane and wrongs the Victim.
17	Fatal Imprudence	The Imprudent; a Victim <i>OR</i> an Object Lost	The Imprudent, by neglect or ignorance, loses the Object or wrongs the Victim.
18	Involuntary crimes of love	A Lover; a Beloved; a Revealer	The Lover and the Beloved have unknowingly broken a taboo through their romantic relationship, and the Revealer reveals this to them.
19	Slaying of kin unrecognized	The Slayer; an Unrecognized Victim	The Slayer kills the Unrecognized Victim.
20	Self-sacrifice for an ideal	A Hero; an Ideal; a Creditor <i>OR</i> a Person/Thing sacrificed	The Hero sacrifices the Person or Thing for their Ideal, which the Creditor then takes.
21	Self-sacrifice for kin	A Hero; a Kinsman; a Creditor <i>OR</i> a Person/Thing sacrificed	The Hero sacrifices a Person or Thing for their Kinsman, which the Creditor then takes.
22	All sacrificed for passion	A Lover; an Object of fatal Passion; the Person/Thing sacrificed	A Lover sacrifices a Person or Thing for the Object of their Passion, which is then lost forever.
23	Necessity of sacrificing loved ones	A Hero; a Beloved Victim; the Necessity for the Sacrifice	The Hero wrongs the Beloved Victim because of the Necessity of their Sacrifice.
24	Rivalry of superior vs. inferior	A Superior Rival; an Inferior Rival; the Object of Rivalry	An Inferior Rival bests a Superior Rival and wins the Object of Rivalry.
25	Adultery	Two Adulterers; a Deceived Spouse	Two Adulterers conspire against the deceased spouse.
26	Crimes of love	A Lover; the Beloved	A Lover and the Beloved break a taboo by initiating a romantic relationship
27	Discovery of the dishonour of a loved one	A Discoverer; the Guilty One	The Discoverer discovers the wrongdoing committed by the Guilty One.
28	Obstacles to love	Two Lovers; an Obstacle	Two Lovers face an Obstacle together.
29	An enemy loved	A Lover; the Beloved Enemy; the Hater	The allied Lover and Hater have opposed attitudes towards the Beloved Enemy.
30	Ambition	An Ambitious Person; a Thing Coveted; an Adversary	The Ambitious Person seeks the Thing Coveted and is opposed by the Adversary.
31	Conflict with a god	A Mortal; an Immortal	The Mortal and the Immortal enter a conflict.
32	Mistaken jealousy	A Jealous One; an Object of whose Possession He is Jealous;	The Jealous One falls Victim to the Cause or the Author of the Mistake,

No.	Name	Necessary elements	Description
		a Supposed Accomplice; a Cause <i>OR</i> an Author of the Mistake	becomes jealous of the Object, and becomes conflicted with the Supposed Accomplice.
33	Erroneous judgment	A Mistaken One; a Victim of the Mistake; a Cause <i>OR</i> an Author of the Mistake; the Guilty One	The Mistaken One falls Victim to the Cause or the Author of the Mistake and passes judgment against the Victim of the Mistake when it should be passed against the Guilty One instead.
34	Remorse	A Culprit; an Interrogator; a Victim <i>OR</i> the Sin	The Culprit wrongs the Victim or commits the Sin and is at odds with the Interrogator, who seeks to understand the situation.
35	Recovery of a lost one	A Seeker; the One Found	The Seeker finds the One Found.
36	Loss of loved ones	A Kinsman Slain; a Kinsman Spectator; an Executioner	The Kinsman witnesses the killing of the Kinsman Slain by the Executioner.

## **20 Master Plots**

“20 Master Plots” is a book written by a film producer, writer and professor in the Department of Media and Theatre Arts at Montana State University Christopher Booker and first published in 1993 with many revisions in the years after. In his book, Tobias (2011) formulated 20 fundamental plotlines that appear across literature, film and theater. According to Tobias (2011), these 20 archetypes of the stories include:

1. Quest: a hero sets out on an epic journey to locate a significant object or person, experiencing profound personal growth along the way. Examples provided by the author include Frodo's journey in *Lord of the Rings*.
2. Adventure: although being similar to the Quest, this plotline focuses more on the process and excitement of the journey itself rather than the protagonist's internal transformation. One of the most famous franchises with this archetype is *Indiana Jones*.
3. Pursuit: this archetype is characterized by a relentless chase and thrives on the dynamic between the hunter and the hunted, as seen, for example, in *The Terminator*.

4. Rescue: in this narrative, a character finds themselves in danger, because of which the hero embarks on a mission to save them. This archetype was and is widely used by many superhero stories.
5. Escape: the protagonist is being captured and must create and realise a plan to escape. One of the modern examples according to Tobias (2011) is *The Shawshank Redemption*.
6. Revenge: vengeance is the protagonist's main goal in this archetype. As an example, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is given.
7. The Riddle: the central element of this plot is a mystery, which needs to be solved or investigated, often accompanied by danger, e.g. novels of Agatha Christie or A. Conan Doyle.
8. Rivalry: two entities compete against each other for power, love, valuable object etc.
9. Underdog: a character, at first glance at a disadvantage, triumphs against overwhelming odds. Author provides *Rocky* as an example.
10. Temptation: the protagonist faces a moral dilemma, having to choose between the righteous path and the wrong, but tempting alternative. Luke Skywalker's resistance to the dark side in *Star Wars* is one of the examples of this.
11. Metamorphosis: a plot twist of a significant physical or psychological change of the protagonist fundamentally alters the whole story. Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* is a great example of such archetype use.
12. Transformation: this plotline is similar to Metamorphosis but focuses on a more gradual internal change. Prominent example – Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*.

13. Maturation: according to the name, this plot features a character, typically young, who learns life lessons and becomes more mature.
14. Love: the main line in this archetype is a romantic relationship.
15. Forbidden Love: Love archetype, but with addition of complex societal norms or opposing backgrounds, which stand in a way of the main characters, for example *Romeo and Juliet*.
16. Sacrifice: a character sacrifices something of great value to them for the greater good.
17. Discovery: a concealed truth or secret is unveiled, which significantly affects the characters and storyline.
18. Wretched Excess: a character's indulgence in luxury and vice leads to their downfall. As an example, Tobias (2011) brought up *The Great Gatsby*.
19. Ascension: this plot follows the protagonist's rise to power or wealth.
20. Descension: contrary to ascension, this plotline sees a character experiencing a fall from grace or loss of power.

These 20 plots offered by Tobias (2011) are one more way to classify and understand the narrative structures which make the foundation of thousands of stories, providing insights into storytelling mechanics and inspiration for crafting new narratives.

### ***The Seven Basic Plots***

“*The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories*” is a book written by the English journalist and writer Christopher Booker and first published in 2004. After spending 34 years researching and analyzing thousands of stories (Mars-Jones, 2004) appearing in the wide variety of mediums ranging from ancient myths and legends and classical fiction to modern cinema, opera and TV, he was able to distill the formula for so-called *meta-plot*, which is the foundation that is presented in every possible story, as well as

seven plots that are most frequently used as basis for any story. In his book, Booker (2006) is analyzing solely the construction of the story, its shapes rather than descriptive or moral values. He is also noting that the main concern in each story is around its hero(es). Their fate is what is important for the audience, with their character we identify the most, and all other characters and events are present merely for the purpose of development and realization of the main hero of the story (Booker, 2006).

In his definition of *meta-plot*, Booker (2006) distinguishes five phases called *stages*, which are present in most stories and that are usually going in the same order:

- Anticipation stage: during this stage, protagonist is usually presented with the adventure they will take part in.
- Dream stage: in this stage, main hero has started their adventure and reached some success.
- Frustration stage: during this phase, hero is losing their invincibility and are being confronted with the enemy (in the form of other characters, events, actions etc.)
- Nightmare stage: in this stage, things are even worse than during the Frustration stage, and audience is presented with the loss of hope for the protagonist. Usually, this stage is the climax of the plot.
- Resolution: as this phase is the last one, it's during it that main hero is overcoming the enemy.

After analyzing the stages of meta-plot, Booker (2006) proceeds with the classification of various examples of story from multiple mediums. The result is seven distinct categories into which one can put any kind of story regardless of genre, period or country of origin. These seven stories are listed as following:

1. **Overcoming the Monster:** in this story, protagonist is faced with antagonistic force usually greater than the protagonist themselves. Their confrontation is ended with the victory of main hero.
2. **Rags to Riches:** according to this archetype, protagonist is starting poor and works their way to wealth and power. Occasionally, this story includes losing the acquired gains, reflecting on past mistakes and gaining it back with new wisdom.
3. **The Quest:** protagonist in this story is trying to obtain an object or end up in the desired location. The process is made harder due to obstacles on their way.
4. **Voyage and Return:** main character is going to a specific location which endangers their world, or which contains unique knowledge and returns back after defeating the evil or learning lessons from their experience.
5. **Comedy:** this archetype is usually set around light and humorous protagonist, who is facing more and more confusing circumstances which resolve in the single last event that makes the story clear and results in happy ending.
6. **Tragedy:** this story is contrasting with the previous, Comedy, in such way that there is usually a sad ending to the events happening in it. Another distinctive characteristic is that main character often has a major flaw that leads to a series of tragic events and eventually the unfortunate end of themselves.
7. **Rebirth:** this story plot is defined by a major event that is leading to the serious change in the protagonist's way of doing and thinking, ultimately transforming them into the better self.

## **Conclusions**

As we can see from the literature review, all stories that appear across various channels such as books, films, and theater, always have a core for their storyline – an archetype.

Often, these stories share the archetype with each other, even when it is not easily distinguishable at the first glance. Some stories are built using multiple archetypes fused together, and in some cases story plot may drastically change as the story evolves, leading from one archetype to another. It is important to understand what is the archetype and how it influences the way the plot is conveyed to make better stories and to execute them better using, in the scope of this project, various visual techniques. In the following chapters I will provide an overview of some of those techniques as well as their use cases in my project.

### **Visual techniques, their role in carrying the story**

#### **Visual techniques overview**

The term *visual techniques* is usually used to describe various methods and tools used to convey ideas, emotions, and narratives through different forms of visual media, such as photography, film, graphic design and animation. There exist many such techniques, some of which include:

- **Composition:** a specific arrangement of elements within a frame that creates balance, harmony, and attracts interest of the viewer visually. There are many rules of composition, such as rule of thirds and golden ratio, as well as various principles, e.g. symmetry, balance, proximity, depth etc (Block, 2007; Freeman, 2007).
- **Colour theory:** the study of how certain colours interact with other colours and how each distinct colour or its hues can evoke different emotions or convey specific meaning. Colour theory includes such concepts as colour harmony, contrast, saturation, and temperature (Agoston, 2013; Itten, 1970).

- **Lighting:** like colours, manipulation of light can enhance mood, create depth, and draw attention to specific elements within a scene. Used primarily in photography and film, lighting techniques include choice of lights and their properties, their positioning, as well as various techniques such as chiaroscuro and high-key/low-key lighting (Agoston, 2013; Landau, 2014).
- **Camera angles and perspectives:** positioning of real or virtual camera relative to the subject in the scene can also provide a specific viewpoint or change mood of the scene. It essentially follows the same rules as the composition does, but in physical space (Mercado, 2022).
- **Typography:** the design and arrangement of text in visual media is often used to provide additional context but can also be used as an art form itself (for example in lyric videos) creating new areas of experimentation for visual storytelling. Typography has its own set of rules and considerations such as font choice, size, spacing, and hierarchy.
- **Editing:** the order in which so-called *cuts*, fades and transitions happen sets the rhythm of the narrative, making it more dynamic or slow-paced. Good editing also contributes to the overall understanding of the story.
- **Symbolism and other abstract techniques:** symbolism is an old technique used throughout the history of art to add deeper meaning to seemingly ordinary subjects or objects, and to create visual metaphors.

These and many other visual techniques are used in all forms of visual media by artists and producers to improve their visual storytelling and to define the key visual components of the story archetype. Each technique can be used by itself or in combination with others to achieve specific artistic goals within visual media. In the following chapters, I give an overview of some of the listed visual techniques and

concepts and what is their role in storytelling and supporting the chosen story archetype and its characters.

### **Colour**

Colour plays a fundamental role in visual storytelling, influencing mood, atmosphere, emotion (Wilms & Oberfeld, 2018), and narrative interpretation.

Colour hue, as well as colour brightness and saturation can evoke specific moods and emotions (Wilms & Oberfeld, 2018) within a visual composition. Warm bright and saturated colours closer to red in spectrum are increasing person's arousal, while cooler colours like blues and greens are in most cases responsible for the increase of the attractiveness and desirability, otherwise known as valence (Wilms & Oberfeld, 2018). We can use this knowledge and by carefully selecting and manipulating colours can establish the tone and ambiance of a scene, immersing viewers in the intended emotional experience, whether to convey warmth, energy, or passion, or evoke feelings of calmness, tranquility, or melancholy.

Colour contrast and saturation can also be used to create visual hierarchy and draw attention to specific elements within a composition. Bright, saturated colours or contrasting hues can act as points of attention, guiding the viewer and emphasizing key elements of the story. On the other hand, muted or desaturated colours used for things like the background allow other elements to be more prominent when creating the visual narrative.

Different colours are often associated with specific symbols. This, however, may be specific to certain regions, so one needs to be careful when selecting colours for symbolic purposes. Some examples of colours as symbols in western cultures are red for energy, anger or fear or blue for feelings of serenity, sadness, or stability. By incorporating colour symbolism into visual storytelling, emotional impact of the

artistic work is increased and deeper layers of meaning and symbolism are being communicated to the viewer.

Another use of colour is for character and story development. Colour can be used to reflect and reinforce the personalities of the characters within a story. Artists can associate certain consistent colours with specific characters or events, therefore helping viewers to identify them and unconsciously connect parts of the story.

Overall, colour serves as a powerful tool in visual storytelling, allowing artists to convey mood, emotion, symbolism, and narrative meaning in dynamic and engaging ways. One can create better visual representation of the story by using the psychological and symbolic properties of colour.

### **Symbolism**

Symbolism is one of the many techniques that has been used for many years in various forms of visual arts to add figurative meaning to literal objects (Muller-Freienfels, 1948). Using symbolism, one can employ visual elements to represent abstract ideas, emotions, or even entire narratives. There are many applications of this visual technique for storytelling.

Firstly, using a symbolic approach one can add deeper meanings to artwork. A seemingly ordinary object can, depending on the context, represent various underlying meanings, therefore becoming a symbol. Depending on the context, something abstract can also imply meaning added by the creator of such symbol (Muller-Freienfels, 1948). Symbols are equally understandable and ambiguous, which invites viewers to become active participants, and to try and decipher the layers of meaning implied by the artist, or even imagine and create their own.

Symbols also evoke emotional responses because they go beyond intellectual understanding. As described in the previous sections, colours themselves can evoke a

certain emotional response from the viewers. By strategically combining visual elements with colours, artists can create a specific mood or atmosphere, influencing how viewers experience the artwork.

Symbolism is extremely culturally specific. What is accepted in one culture as something good can easily mean the opposite in completely different cultures, but sometimes even in the neighboring countries. The understanding of these cultural nuances allows artists to connect with specific audiences on a deeper level while avoiding miscommunication with the representatives of other cultures.

Another strength of symbolism is that it allows artists to create a so-called *visual vocabulary* within their work. Recurring symbolic elements can create cohesive story and connect different parts of the story together, essentially contributing to the overall flow of the plot.

Symbolism is a great technique that allows to reach not just eyes, but also to the hearts and minds of the viewers, stimulating them intellectually and emotionally.

### **Typography**

Typography is the art and technique of arranging letterforms. This happens through the selection of typefaces, sizes of letters, leading, spacing and kerning (Bringhurst, 1996). Although initially created as a functional technique for writing down the spoken language, it quickly became more than that. While its primary purpose nowadays is still to convey literal meaning with the letters, it is also often used as a visual element in many applications, such as posters, signs and even music videos (so-called *lyric* videos), becoming not only functional but also visual technique used by artists.

From a semiotic perspective, typography is a system of sign (Nørgaard, 2009). Each typeface's unique letterforms and stylistic decisions function as a signifier carrying meaning. This meaning is a combination of the three components:

- Signifier (font/typeface itself): the visual characteristics of the typeface itself, including weight, size, serifs, and overall design, are the first visual cues the viewer catches.
- Signified (meaning): the conceptual associations evoked by the font. For example, a decorative script font is often used to signify elegance and formality, while a bold, geometric sans-serif might signify modernity and power. The style of the typeface provides a second cue for the viewer to combine with the first one in the process of understanding the meaning.
- Referent (context): the context in which the typeface is used, including the surrounding design elements and the overall message being conveyed, creates a third visual cue for the viewer, completing the composition and providing the message as a whole.

Typography also plays a significant role in establishing visual hierarchy within a composition. Through variations in font size, weight, and style, one can create a (dis)order of information, directing the viewer's attention to the most crucial elements or plunge them into visual chaos. Important information, like headlines, are often using larger, bolder fonts to attract attention, while body text utilizes a smaller, lighter weight to provide readability (Knight & Glaser, 2012). This creates a clear information architecture and a user-friendly experience for the viewer.

Beyond conveying information, typography can evoke emotions of the viewer (Knight & Glaser, 2012). Variables like font style choice, its weight, placement and colour all play an important role of how we perceive the information. Serif fonts tend to be associated with tradition and trust, while sans-serif fonts are perceived with a sense of modernity and efficiency. More playful fonts, from the script category for example, can evoke feelings of whimsy and informality, while bold, angular fonts

might create a sense of power or urgency. It is important to understand these emotional associations to create a desired mood or atmosphere within the artistic work.

Effective typography often goes beyond a single, static font. It is important to be aware of details when pairing and contrasting of fonts within same family, or even between multiple typefaces to add visual interest and further enhance the literal meaning of the text, or add deeper, symbolic meaning. It is possible to pair complementary fonts to create harmony, or to use contrasting fonts to create dynamic tension. This can help address both legibility and aesthetics of the artwork.

Conveying meaning through typography is important when dealing with visual communication, and, as I will describe in the next chapters, especially important when creating lyric videos, since typography would be the main technique used for that. It is crucial to understand how typographical forms can add deeper meaning or help organize the composition of the artwork while at the same time conveying literal meaning of the words.

## **Conclusion**

Various visual techniques can be used as a powerful tool when incorporating story elements in the artwork. Since many of them are related to each other, it is possible to use not only one of them, but any combination to better convey the story and add deeper levels of meaning to film or animation. Artists should familiarize themselves with these techniques to improve their visual storytelling skills.

### **Visual techniques used in the work, their role in supporting the story**

#### **The archetype of the selected story**

Before discussing which techniques would be suitable for conveying the story, first we need to understand the archetype of the selected story. In the scope of this work I

chose a song by Ukrainian group «Воплі Відоплясова» called «Чіо Чіо Сан». The song lyrics are expressing the story of a woman, Chio-san, who is being kidnapped and presumably killed by an attacker, and a man, Akira-san, who is her beloved one, and who seeks revenge, which eventually results in the death of the attacker. Detailed original lyrics in Ukrainian, as well as translation into English, are presented in the Appendix A.

Already, we can distill that in this story we have three main characters: a loving couple of Chio and Akira, and an unnamed villain. We also have the set of actions happening in the story: love, kidnapping, murder, revenge. Using these two sets of distinct features of this particular story, it is possible to assign the archetype(s) it has in its core based on the selected archetype classification system. As described in the previous chapters, it can also be the case that a story has combined archetypes. In this case, archetypes of this particular story from the proposed systems would be:

- A mix of archetypes 3 (Crime pursued by vengeance), 10 (Abduction), 28 (Obstacles to love) and 36 (Loss of loved ones) according to the classification of Polti (1921).
- A mix of plotlines 6 (Revenge) and 14 (Love) from the system of Tobias (2011).
- Only the approximate definition of archetype 1 (Overcoming the Monster) from “*The Seven Basic Plots*” of Booker (2006) is appropriate for the selected story.

As we can see, the more nuanced system is and the more archetypes it includes, the harder it is to assign only one archetype to the story. Indeed, as Polti (1921) explained in his work, many stories actually consist of multiple archetypes taken as a whole or partially, which adds to the complexity of the story and makes it more interesting. On

the contrary, the less archetypes a system includes, the harder it is to select exact one when determining the type of the story. In the case of selected song, a classification created by Booker (2006) is disadvantageous, since neither of the proposed archetypes provides enough details relevant to the plot of the selected song, and the only way to classify the plot is by selecting an approximate archetype (in this case – Overcoming the monster).

### **Visual techniques used to convey the story**

After understanding the key elements of the story, like its archetype, characters and events, it is possible to determine appropriate visual techniques to convey the story through evoking necessary emotions and directing viewer's attention to the key elements of the story.

For creating the music video for the selected song, I decided to go with the lyric video. Although initially created as a way to provide listeners with the lyrics of their favourite songs, lyric videos very fast transformed into the art form of their own. Many popular artists started treating their lyric videos as seriously as their main music videos as well (Ed Sheeran, 2017; Imagine Dragons, 2022; Marshmello & Anne-Marie, 2018; Taylor Swift, 2017).

In the case of the selected song, I decided to combine traditional and modern elements by replicating a style of the theater of shadows – a traditional form of art, widespread across Asia – using digital animation. In the next sections I will present the details of the used techniques.

### ***Typography***

Since shadow theater should be integrated within the lyric video, I chose to use a typeface that would serve as a cutout, behind which the events of the video would unfold with characters being animated, similar to the real process. For that purpose, I

went with the Fit font family (Fig. 1) by David Jonathan Ross (2017) for the most of the lyrics, as it provides enough variability of weights to serve different needs throughout the video. To add cultural context to the video, I decided to switch up the name of Chio-san in the chorus with Japanese characters. For that I picked the font VDL-LogoJrBlack (Fig. 1) by Kyoko Katsumoto & Shigeru Katsumoto (2008), since it provides Japanese characters in the similar style as the main chosen font.

### Figure 1

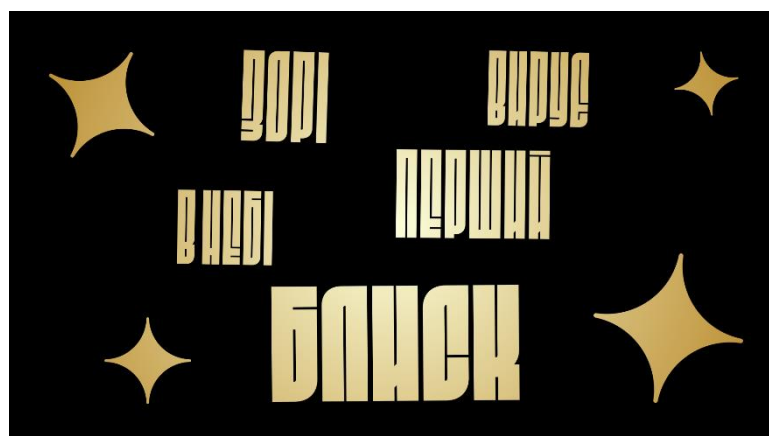
*Fonts: Fit (top) and VDL-LogoJrBlack (bottom)*



To add to the emotional context, I used thinner weights from the family to signify more delicate, lyrical parts of the song, like the bridge (Fig. 2), while aggressive, bold weights are used in the dramatic or energetic parts of the video, for example fight scenes, or as a cutout, behind which I was able to create additional animations to better convey the story told in song (Fig. 3).

### Figure 2

*Thinner Weight of Font Used for the Lyrical Part*



**Figure 3**

*Heavier Weight of Font Used for the Dynamic Parts or Shadow Theater Cutouts*



### *Colour*

As described in the previous chapters, use of colour can significantly impact the perception of the images by the viewers. This can be used to a great extent when creating the animation, as different colours may suggest different emotions and can lean the viewer towards better understanding of the story in the video.

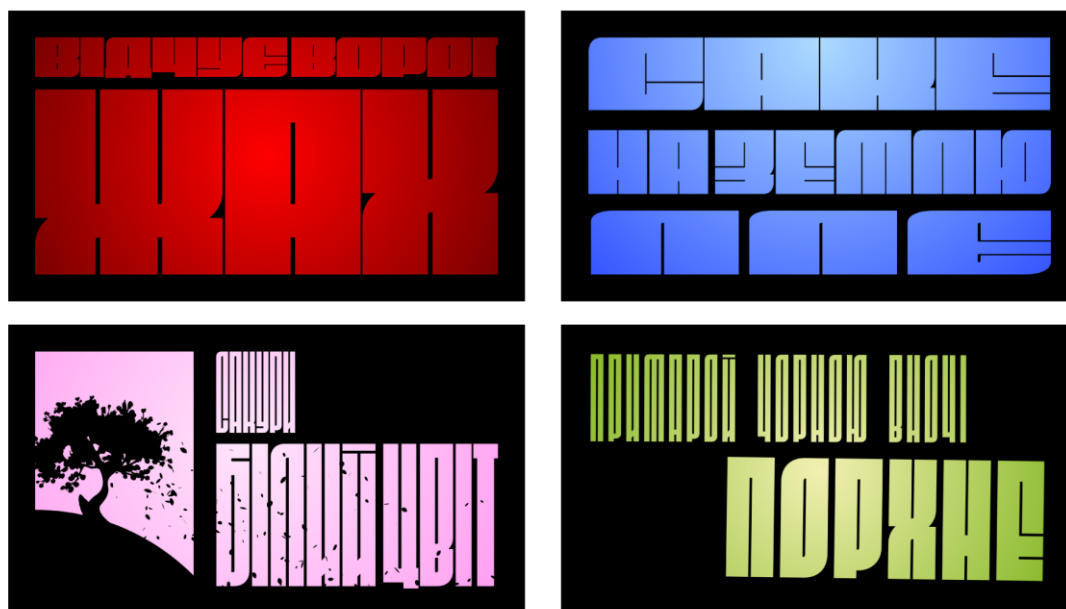
In the scope of this project, I used the following approach to the colour selection depending on the scene (Fig. 4):

- To portray aggression, anger, fear, energy – bright, aggressive colours in the red spectrum: red, crimson, scarlet, orange, vermilion etc.
- To convey sadness, tears, deep emotions – hues of blue.

- To add context to symbols like sakura tree – shades of pink, white.
- To evoke calmness, relaxation – shades of green and light yellow.

**Figure 4**

*Colour Choice Based on Emotional or Symbolic Meaning*



The changes of colour in the video are also linked to the dynamic rhythm of the song. In some sections fast-paced change of colour adds to the energetic and aggressive changes in the story evolution and lyrics, while in others, like bridge, slow colour shift helps with changing the mood to calmer and sets respective emotions.

### ***Symbolism***

Use of certain graphical objects with added meaning as the symbols has a long history of practice in various arts. For this song, I chose two symbols: sakura tree and crane.

Sakura tree is explicitly mentioned in the song, therefore using it as one of the visual symbolic objects was a logical choice, as it helps to better connect lyric video with the contents of the song. Sakura is a well-known Japanese symbol, used for centuries in different forms of local art. It holds multiple symbolic meanings: it's

blossom is the symbol for beauty; the appearance of the flowers each spring symbolizes the birth of new life; the fall of the petals is the symbol of death (Nikodinovska, 2015). These symbolic meanings directly correspond to the elements of the story of the song: the beauty of Chio-san, the story of the (birth) of the love between Chio and Akira, as well as tragic course of events that led to the violent death of the girl (Fig. 5).

### Figure 5

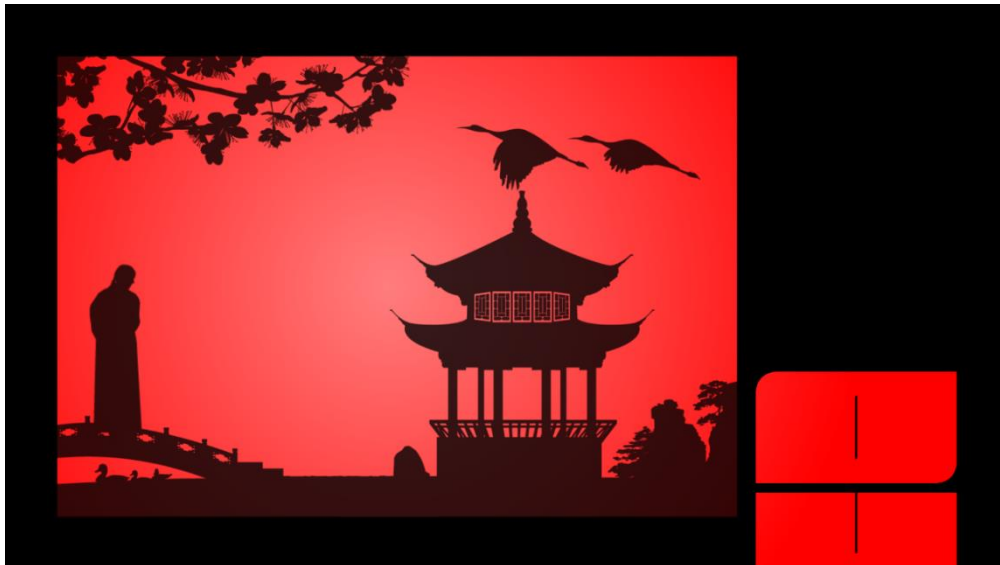
*Various appearances of the Sakura Tree*



The second symbol that I decided to use is the crane. Although in the song there is no specific species of bird mentioned, I chose crane for several reasons. Crane appears in various texts and images across all Asian countries, usually as a symbol of eternal youth and happiness (*Cranes Mythology and Culture – KZN Crane Foundation*, 2017). In Japan specifically, it is being perceived as a holy creature that can bring good luck or longevity. In the case of the video, I used this symbol multiple times to add the context to the different parts of the story. For instance, when the cranes first appear, the man – Akira-san – is lowering his head in sadness and despair because he sees a pair of (loving) cranes flying above, in which he sees himself with Chio and understands that his beloved is forever lost (Fig. 6).

### **Figure 6**

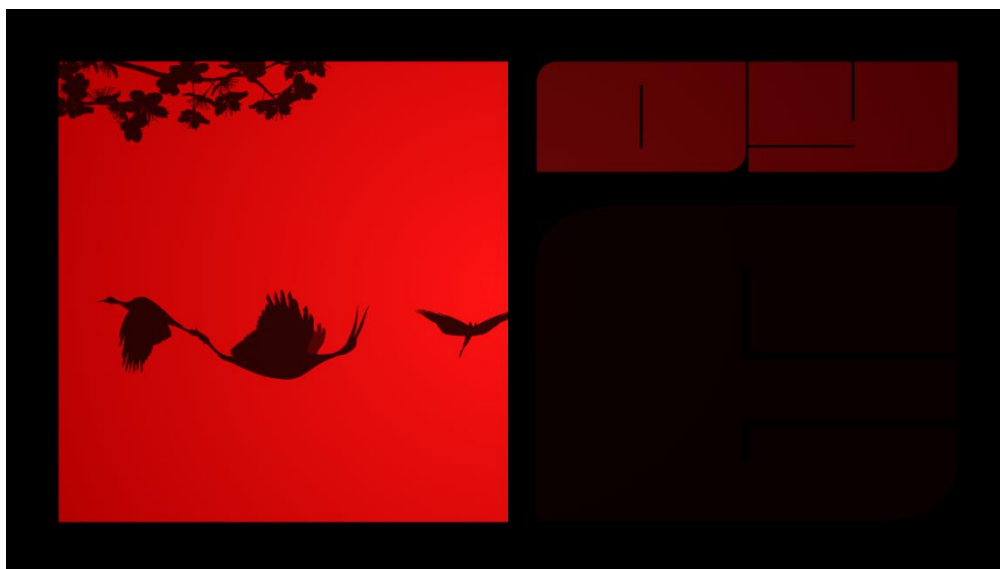
#### *First Appearance of the Cranes*



Next time the cranes appear is before the bridge in the song. One of the cranes is falling down in the scene, symbolizing the death of Chio-san, therefore the death of the happiness and youth (Fig. 7).

**Figure 7**

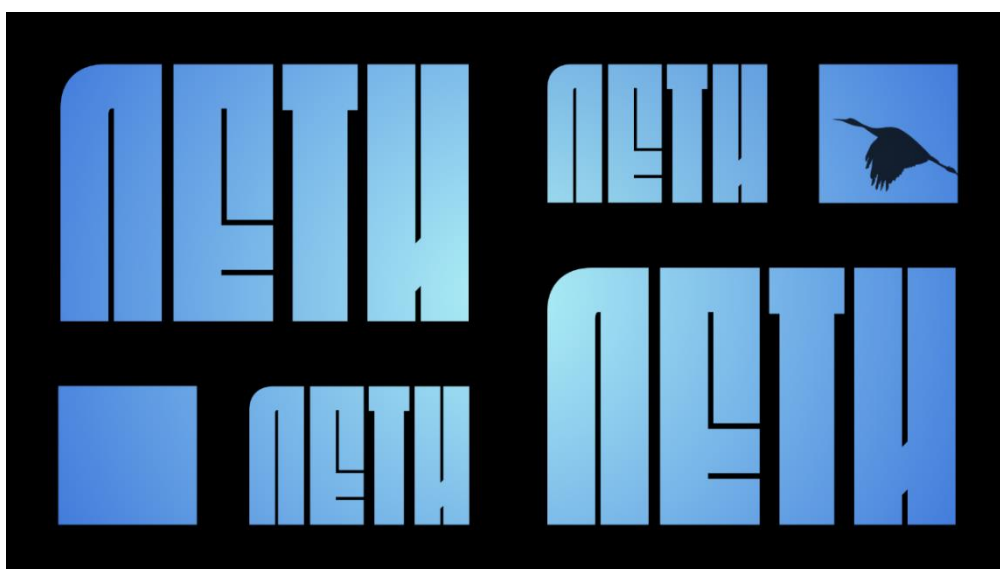
*Crane Falling Down*



The third appearance of the cranes is in the lyrical bridge. Both of them are flying upwards in their respective parts, symbolizing the loving relationship, which was between Chio and Akira before the tragedy happened (Fig. 8).

**Figure 8**

*Crane Flying Upwards*



The last time we see crane is in the third verse, where it is sitting on the branch and screaming. This is the symbol of the internal state of Akira's soul, torn apart because of the loss of the loved one and full of anger, ready for revenge (Fig. 9).

### Figure 9

*Crane Screams*



The use of symbols is a powerful tool that helps convey the story and evoke certain emotions and should not be neglected when creating animated videos. It is also very helpful and convenient to use such visual symbols in lyric videos to add additional layers of meaning and depth to the story.

### Conclusions

As we can see from the resulting video created as a part of this Master's project, the use of various visual techniques greatly impacts the perception of the plot and helps support the underlying archetype of the selected story. It is possible to watch the full video via the link provided in the Appendix B.

## Conclusions

All stories that one may find in books, films, theater, and other art forms tend to have a core for their storyline – an archetype. The archetype is not necessarily exclusive to one story and may be common across many of them. Another flexible characteristic of the archetypes is that they can be combined together to form a new, mixed archetype with all or some details of the original plotlines it consists of. Understanding what the archetype is and how it influences the way the story is perceived by the viewer is an important stage of the development of any project.

For that, multiple visual techniques can be used to convey story elements in the artwork. Using combinations of the techniques one can add deeper meaning to the chosen story or to help viewers more easily understand the plotline. Although I provided the detailed explanation and use cases for three of the most relevant ones in the scope of this project, it is possible to advance the research further and dive into details of other techniques used not only in the digital animation, but also in film, television, and theater.

As a final part of the project, I created a lyric video for the song, incorporating the knowledge obtained from the two theoretical parts. This video could be used as an example of how described visual techniques can be used in practice to help better convey the story and improve one's visual storytelling.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A. Song Lyrics

#### Original in Ukrainian

Уєє-єє  
Оу-є-єє

Сакури білий цвіт  
Хвилює серця рух  
Сумний Акіра-сан  
Саке на землю лє

Чіо, Чіо, Чіо-сан! Чіо, Чіо, Чіо-сан!  
Чіо, Чіо, Чіо-сан! Чіо, Чіо, Чіо-сан!

Уєє-єє  
Оу-є-єє

Пелюсток хугу сніг  
Здіймає шаблі змах  
Відчує ворог жах  
Кохану той, хто вкрав

Чіо, Чіо, Чіо-сан! Чіо, Чіо, Чіо-сан!  
Чіо, Чіо, Чіо-сан! Чіо, Чіо, Чіо-сан!

Уєє-єє

Оу-є-єє  
Є-єє-є

Моя любов на самоті  
Порхне примарой чорною вночі  
Як той метелик навіжений  
Крила спалоє у свічі

Як ті думки  
Жага і стогін в забутті  
Лети, лети, мій сон  
Саваном землю огорни

Колись мене  
Пройде й повернеться і знов  
Як дим і небуття, запал і почуття  
Зорі вирує в небі перший блиск

Моя любов летить  
Зоря вогнем горить  
Метелику, вернись  
Дай ся на краю зупинить!

В гаю далекім – спів  
Самотній плаче птах  
Нешадний небокрай  
На обрії порсне кров

Чіо, Чіо, Чіо-сан! Чіо, Чіо, Чіо-сан!  
Чіо, Чіо, Чіо-сан! Чіо, Чіо, Чіо-сан!

Чіо, Чіо  
Сакури білий цвіт  
Чіо-сан!  
Пелюсток віє сніг  
Чіо, чіо  
Лежить розтягтий враг  
Чіо-сан!  
Кохання той, хто врік

Чіо, Чіо, Чіо-сан! Чіо, Чіо, Чіо-сан!  
Чіо, Чіо, Чіо-сан! Чіо, Чіо, Чіо-сан!

#### English translation

Uh yeah  
Oh yeah

The white blossom of sakura  
Is moved by the heartbeat  
Sad Akira-san  
Pours sake on the ground

Chio, Chio, Chio-san! Chio, Chio, Chio-san!  
Chio, Chio, Chio-san! Chio, Chio, Chio-san!

Uh yeah  
Oh yeah

Snow of petals  
Is raised by the swing of the saber  
The enemy will feel terror  
The one who stole the beloved

Chio, Chio, Chio-san! Chio, Chio, Chio-san!  
Chio, Chio, Chio-san! Chio, Chio, Chio-san!

Uh yeah

Oh yeah  
Ye-e-eah

Alone my love  
Will fly like a dark ghost in the night  
Like crazy butterfly  
That burns wings in candle

Like those thoughts  
Thirst and groan in oblivion  
Fly, fly, my dream  
Cover the ground with a shroud

Someday it will pass  
It will pass and come back again  
Like smoke and nothingness, passion and feelings  
The first glimmer of dawn is raging in the sky

My love flies  
The star is on fire  
Butterfly, come back  
Let me stop you at the edge!

In a distant grove there is singing  
Of lonely crying bird  
Merciless heaven  
Blood splatters on the horizon

Chio, Chio, Chio-san! Chio, Chio, Chio-san!  
Chio, Chio, Chio-san! Chio, Chio, Chio-san!

Chio, Chio  
The white blossom of sakura  
Chio-san!  
The snow of petals  
Ciao Ciao  
The torn apart enemy lies  
Chio-san!  
The one who killed the love

Chio, Chio, Chio-san! Chio, Chio, Chio-san!  
Chio, Chio, Chio-san! Chio, Chio, Chio-san!

**Appendix B. Link to the lyric video**

Serhii Yershykhin (Director). (2024). *Волні Відоплясова – Чіо Чіо Сан (Lyric video)*.

[https://youtu.be/C6tTr\\_qYlig](https://youtu.be/C6tTr_qYlig)

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