Monsters and Addicts: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Shark Representations in Disney's Scripted Marine Environment

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Abstract

This article analyzes the representation of the shark in two popular Disney animated films. I draw on social semiotics as an analytical framework, focusing on the structural aspects of film while considering how meaning is communicated through representations of the world (representation), interactions with viewers (orientation), and the structuring of texts as a whole (organization). Data include three instances from the films where sharks appear or in which other characters make reference to them: one scene from The Little Mermaid*; one scene from* Finding Nemo*; and an extended sequence, also from* Finding Nemo*. The analysis uncovers the ways in which structural elements such as camera, lighting, sound and rhythm, within recognizable patterns of micro-narratives, contribute significantly to the discursive construction of shark as monster and shark as addict.*

Key words: critical discourse analysis, sharks, Disney, environment, social semiotics

1. Introduction

Tens of millions of sharks are killed by humans each year. Of the more than 500 species of sharks, approximately 20 per cent are threatened with extinction (Humane Society 2012). Worldwide, marine ecosystems are suffering a severe depletion of shark populations, and if this trend continues, we are likely to see severe consequences (Dulvy et al. 2008; Ward and Myers 2005). As apex predators, for example, sharks are key to regulating species abundance and distribution—regulation necessary to maintain an intricate and healthy marine ecosystem full of diversity and life (Ward and Myers 2005; Myers et al. 2007). Consider phytoplankton, the tiny aquatic plants that convert carbon dioxide to oxygen, providing much of the oxygen humans breathe on the surface. Without sharks to prey on the small fish that feed on phytoplankton, these plankton feeders could grow out of control, consuming the plankton that people depend on for oxygen and survival (Stewart 2007).

Despite their importance to our ecosystem, sharks are facing extinction. One reason for this is overfishing. Many species of pelagic sharks are caught as bycatch in longline, purse seine, and gillnet fisheries (Dulvy et al. 2008). Related to this is the high demand for shark fins. Tens of millions of sharks are finned each year—a process that involves capturing sharks, slicing off their

fins, usually for soup, and tossing them back into the sea, alive, where they sink and slowly die. Exacerbating the situation is a public misperception and persecution of sharks. Many people view sharks as senseless killers that actively prey on humans. A population's fear and ignorance of sharks results in people either not caring about sharks or thinking that it is necessary to kill them. Sharks are often perceived as mindless killing machines and represented as such in popular culture and film, where the semiotic resources and structures of the filmic text may communicate and privilege certain meanings over others. The film *Jaws* (Brown, Zanuck and Spielberg 1975), for example, tells the story of a shark who terrorizes residents of a summer resort town. Its representation of the dangerous and terrifying shark created a certain schemata for films and other popular cultural texts that followed. Examples of this intertextuality can be seen in later films such as the *Jaws* sequels (Brown, Zanuck and Szwarc 1978; Hitzig and Alves 1983; Sargent 1987), *Great White* (Montoro, Tucci and Castellari 1982), *Deep Blue Sea* (Goldsman et al. 1999), *Shark Attack* (Misiorowski 1999), *Open Water* (Lau, Lau and Kentis 2003), *Red Water* (Larkin, Engel and Feigelson 2003), and *Open Water 2: Adrift* (Maag, Schultz-Deyle and Horn 2006), all of which perpetuated myths of sharks as man-eaters and mindless killers. This, despite the fact that the majority of the over 500 species of sharks pose little danger to humans.

In this paper, I analyze the discursive representation of sharks in two animated Disney films, choosing to focus on animated films because of their popularity with children as well as adults. Feng Sun and Scharrer (2004: 15) note: 'Children in the United States grow up with Disney. Watching Disney's videos and films, going to Disney theme parks, and using Disney products are often connected to childhood memories that give Disney a power with which few in the media industry can compete'. There have been no linguistic studies that focus on the discursive construction of the shark in multimodal texts such as film. Multimodal texts are ones which integrate a number of different modes to make meaning; in the case of film, modes include spoken language, moving images, music, and sound effects. Several studies have employed critical discourse perspectives in analyzing how particular non-human animals, such as the salmon or pig, are discursively constructed in written texts (Stibbe 2003, 2006). Goatly (2002) draws on systemic functional linguistics to examine the discursive construction of ten different classes of 'nature', one of which includes aquatic animals, including the shark, in BBC World Service radio broadcasts. The study, focusing mainly on material process clauses of spoken language, shows how sharks are portrayed negatively while 'their effects on humans are magnified out of all proportion' (2002: 12). Despite the influence that Disney's ideology has on popular culture and children, critical linguistic perspectives have largely ignored the world of animated films.

The films *The Little Mermaid* (Clements, Muskar and Ashman 1989) and *Finding Nemo* (Walters et al. 2003) were chosen for the analysis because they represent the two Disney films in which the ocean and underwater world figure prominently while at the same time having reached a position in the top ten grossing films worldwide during their respective years of release. *The Little Mermaid* is a story about Ariel, a mermaid princess curious about life on the surface. With her fish friend Flounder, Ariel collects human artefacts and

visits the surface of the ocean to learn about humans. Ariel falls in love with a human after visiting the surface one night and the film's story is about Ariel vying for the man's love and attempting to transform herself from a mermaid into a human. *Finding Nemo* is a story about Nemo, a clownfish who is captured by a scuba diver and taken to the diver's fish tank in Sydney, Australia. The other fish in the tank devise a plan to help free Nemo. At the same time, Nemo's father Marlin and Marlin's friend Dory (a regal tang) search for Nemo, surviving several underwater adventures along the way. Marlin and Dory finally reach Sydney and are reunited with Nemo shortly after his successful escape.

I argue that the films construct two dominant representations of the shark: shark as monster and shark as addict. When representations are repeated over time, and supported in other popular texts, they reinforce stereotypical understandings and public misperceptions. Since the way in which people interact with ocean ecologies may partly depend on these 'understandings' of marine life, it is crucial to move beyond superficial content analyses to an investigation of how filmic techniques such as camera angles, distance, camera movement, lighting, and sound all contribute to the entirety of the discursive representations. Such an analysis may encourage filmmakers to break with these patterns of representation and possibly avoid future regrets—the kind of regrets expressed by Peter Benchley, author of *Jaws* and co-writer of its screenplay, for the portrayal of sharks in that film (Nelson, 2006).

2. *Analytical Framework*

I follow a critical discourse analytical (CDA) perspective in analyzing the discursive representations of sharks in the two films. CDA—an orientation with diverse theoretical and analytical approaches—looks at how structures of discourse communicate and reproduce power, dominance, and inequality in society (van Dijk 2001: 353). A chief concern of CDA, then, is the relationship between discourse and ideology. Fairclough (1992) explains how discursive practices are ideologically invested if they serve to establish and sustain relations of power in specific social contexts. CDA has proven to be a useful tool for uncovering ideological positions not only through the lexico-grammatical configurations of purely linguistic texts, but also through the configurations of multiple semiotic modes in multimodal texts. Unfortunately, research on the role of discourse, either purely linguistic or multimodal, in the domination of non-human animals has been missing from the literature (Stibbe 2001).

The specific CDA approach I follow in this paper is a social semiotic analytical approach to tele-filmic analysis outlined by Iedema (2001). Social semiotics examines meaning making as a social practice. It identifies semiotic elements that make up a text and how those elements are deployed to convey certain meanings. Iedema (2001: 187) explains: 'A social semiotic analysis aims to enable us to question the ways in which the tele-cinematic text presents "social reality"'. Unlike other approaches to film analysis, this approach to film analysis allows for links between the film's intertextualities and the structural categories common in film theory (i.e., shot, scene, sequence, etc.).

Iedema's (2001) specific approach works with two tools. The first tool is a six-level framework that covers a range of categories common in film and genre analysis:

1. Frame: A single image in a film's structure.
2. Shot: An unedited view of something in a film that is produced by the camera's particular position.
3. Scene: A single piece of action during a film in which there is no change in time or place.
4. Sequence: A series of scenes which form a distinct narrative unit, connected by theme or some kind of logical continuity.
5. Generic Stage: The socially purposeful steps, or moves, constructing an organizational structure of a genre. A narrative genre, for example, may include an orientation, complication, and resolution. Scenes and sequences combine into different stages, which, in turn, signal the specific genre to which they belong.
6. Work as a whole: A consideration of the genre as a whole. The films *The Little Mermaid* and *Finding Nemo* are representative of a fictional, narrative genre.

The second tool in the social semiotic approach builds on the functional linguistic framework developed by Michael Halliday (1994) and assumes that the choices within all modes of communication can be used to do three things: (1) construct a representation of the world; (2) enact social relationships between the communicating parties; and, (3) transform these meanings into a recognizable text. Iedema (2001) calls these three functions, 'representation', 'orientation', and 'organization', respectively.

Representation refers to the meanings that are conveyed as a result of how people, places, and things are depicted in a text. For example, sharks are often visually depicted as having menacing eyes, enormous mouths, and long, sharp teeth. Their proportions are often exaggerated in comparison to other figures in an image. As a result of these semantic representations, viewers recognize sharks as being dangerous, life-threatening animals. The ways in which moving images combine with other modes (spoken language, music, sound effects) in a film also play an important role in representational meaning. For example, what kind of emotions does a film's musical sequences evoke? What kind of associations can be made?

Orientation refers to how images in a film 'interact with viewers and suggest the attitude viewers should take towards what is being represented' (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 145). In other words, a viewer's attitudes and particular ways of identifying with characters in a film are shaped by how characters are positioned, through techniques such as camera angle, distance of a shot, and camera movement. Orientation also involves modality—whether a proposition is represented as true or not. In an animated film, for example, characters and settings are articulated in varying degrees of visual detail, color, light and shade, etc. Think of dream sequences in film, where visual details such as strong glares of light signal the dream experience. High degrees of modality in animation are a result, in part, of the visual details in the backgrounds.

And third, organization refers to the overall coherence and cohesion in a text. This involves organization, or composition, in both space and time. Composition in space has to do with the placement of elements on the screen. An element's position (right, left, top, bottom, center) gives it a particular information value. Elements placed on the left are presented as given, or familiar, information to a viewer, while elements placed on the right are presented as new, or unfamiliar, information to a viewer. Composition in time has to do with how actions or events in a film are linked.

Utilizing this analytical approach, the following analysis uncovers two dominant discursive patterns of representation in the two films. First, I'll look at the discursive representation of shark as monster by analyzing a two-and-a-half minute scene from *The Little Mermaid*. Then, I'll turn to the representation of shark as addict by analyzing a two-shot scene and an extended five-scene sequence, both from *Finding Nemo*. The ideologies implicit in the discursive representations are representative of a wider discourse in popular culture that subjugates sharks. In addition, the representative samples from the two films are especially significant due to the amount of exposure children have to Disney films. The repeated exposures, usually accompanied by a parental stamp of approval, may result in children being especially susceptible to Disney's ideological framework that celebrates humans' dominance over non-human sharks.

3. *Discussion and Analysis*

3.1 Shark as Monster

The Little Mermaid contains a two-and-a-half minute scene in the opening stage of its narrative (beginning at the 6:14 timecode) which ultimately sets up what some consider to be a dominant model of the horror film: the binary opposition of the normal and monstrous (i.e., Wood 2003). The 'shark scene' uses techniques borrowed from the genre of horror to construct this opposition, where the shark is represented as the monster. The scene begins with Ariel and Flounder on a search for human artefacts in a sunken ship. Here, I will look at seven of the first 21 shots in the scene.

> Shot 1: *Medium shot of Ariel and Flounder outside the ship, in front of a porthole.*
>
> - Ariel: Alright, I'm going inside. You can just stay here and ...watch for sharks.
> - Flounder: Okay, yea you go. I'll stay here an-- What?! Sharks?!

In this exchange, Ariel and Flounder are whispering up until Flounder's pause near the end of his utterance. Two quick zooms accompany Flounder's two exclamations after the pause. The first quick zoom from a medium shot to a medium close-up occurs just as Flounder screams *what*, and a second quick zoom from the medium close-up to a close-up occurs with his exclamation of *sharks*. Here, with the coordination of the zooms and the utterances, we can see how the rhythmic cadences of the shot make salient a character's

frightened realization that sharks may be lurking nearby. At the same time, along with the two quick zooms and exclamations, an orchestral sequence in the background builds to a crescendo, underscoring Flounder's stress and panic. Van Leeuwen (1985: 222), explaining the connection between elements that are rhythmically prominent in a text and their perceived importance, notes that 'by placing a word, a gesture, a sound, a camera movement on a moment rhythmically privileged . . . , the editor can make it salient, draw the viewer's attention to it'. The combination of the character's speech, camera movement, and background music are in sync and suggest a setting where something dangerous, i.e., sharks, is near. Here, the intertextuality is evident, as one of the features of the horror film are settings in which monsters may be lurking in the shadows (Bordwell and Thompson 2008: 330).

The final close-up shows Flounder's shaking body with a terrified look on his face, just before he attempts to swim into the ship through the porthole at the end of the shot. The close-up at eye-level enables viewers to understand Flounder's emotions and to empathize with his character. Jewitt and Oyama (2001: 146) note: 'To see people close up is to see them in the way we would normally only see people with whom we are more or less intimately acquainted'. This type of close-up is frequently used in horror films, where it creates an intense mood and provides interaction between the audience and the character in the film.

> *Shot 6: Medium shot from outside the ship, showing Flounder's backside, as he has become stuck in the porthole of the ship while trying to follow Ariel inside.*
>
> - <u>Flounder</u>: Ariel, do you really think there might be sharks around here?

In the sixth shot, Flounder is stuck in the porthole trying to enter the ship. As he whispers his question to Ariel, a large shadow enters the frame from the right, engulfing Flounder's body. At this point, a tiny, yellow Flounder is positioned in the center of the frame. Surrounding him are different shades of gray in the wooden ship and the black shadow of the shark. The tonal contrast here gives the image of a helpless, stuck, and struggling Flounder a high degree of salience, suggesting his vulnerability. The shadow continues to move across the frame, giving way to the faceless, lower portion of a shark's body swimming across the top half of the frame. The angle of the shot is from the top, suggesting the insignificance of Flounder in relation to the shark's enormous shadow and body.

Here, the organization of elements on the screen, i.e., given/new, contribute to how meaning is constructed in this scene. In this shot, the shark and its shadow enter the frame from the right—new information 'to which the viewer should pay particular attention, as the crux of the message' (van Leeuwen 1996: 94). Indeed, the purpose of this new information is to alert the audience of the monster's presence, while the 'victim' in the film remains unaware. Again, the intertextuality is evident as we now have the building tension in a situation where the viewing audience is aware of the stalking monster/shark, but the victim is not—another common feature of the horror genre.

Shot 7: A tracking shot inside the ship that follows Flounder swimming slowly through the ship, from the left to the right.

- Flounder: This is great. I mean, I really, uh, love this. Excitement, adventure, danger, lurking around every corn-- Ahh!

Flounder's sarcastic utterance is cut short when he swims into a human skull, which appears in the frame from the right. The skull scares Flounder, causing him to jump back with a loud scream. This shot brings to mind the false scare—another common technique used in horror films. Like the previous shot, this shot uses lights and shadows to convey an ominous atmosphere. The skull that scares Flounder rests in the shadows inside the ship, with only tiny slivers of light from above bouncing over it. Shadows can be very intense and have a long history in horror films, where they are often used as an omen, foreshadowing the monster or other malevolent phenomena.

Shot 16: Medium shot from inside the ship showing Flounder and Ariel discussing a fork Ariel found inside the ship. The shot shows them in the center of the frame, looking toward the camera, in front of a wide, rectangular window on the ship.

- Flounder: Wow, cool. But, uh, what is it? {Referring to the fork in Ariel's hand}
- Ariel: Huh, I don't know. But I bet Scuttle {a seagull and friend of Ariel's} will.
  {Deep, rumbling sound from outside the ship}

- Flounder: W-what was that?

As Ariel answers Flounder's question, the faceless body of the shark appears again, swimming across the frame, just outside the ship's window and behind the characters. This second appearance of the faceless shark suggests intertextual links to the faceless monster in horror films such as the Friday the 13th series (Jason) or the Halloween series (Michael Myers). By initially hiding the monster's face, the image of a mysterious, incomprehensible figure of evil is conveyed. The shot also serves to heighten tension in the scene, as the knowing audience continues to track the monster/shark stalking the unknowing victim.

Shot 17: Close-up shot, from outside the ship, through the rectangular window. Two of the window's vertical bars and one horizontal bar frame the close-up of Flounder peering out from inside the ship.

- Flounder: Did you hear something?

In the shot, a visibly frightened Flounder swims to the window and peers out, curious about that deep, rumbling sound he hears. He appears to sense something outside, but is still unaware of what it is. The close-up shot of Flounder looking out through the vertical bars of the window resembles a prisoner trapped in a jail cell. The shot brings to mind the idea of 'characters trapped in a room', an element found in horror films to symbolize feelings of

foreboding. In this case, Flounder is imprisoned in the ship, while the monster/shark prepares to attack.

> *Shot 19: Medium close-up shot of Flounder, at eye level, from inside the ship again. Flounder has turned his back to the window to call for Ariel and now faces the camera. The vertical and horizontal bars of the window are behind him.*
>
> * Flounder: Ariel…
> * Ariel: Flounder, will you relax. Nothing is going to…

In this shot, the shark's face is revealed for the first time, rising up slowly from the bottom of the frame. His dorsal fin appears first, then his face and body. This symbolic action of the appearance of a dorsal fin—usually seen as a dorsal fin slowly rising out of the sea—is synonymous with horror in films such as *Jaws*.

As the shark rises into the frame, the camera pans out to a medium-long shot showing a large image of the shark centered directly behind the much smaller image of Flounder. The shark's menacing, bloodshot eyes stare down at the yellow image of Flounder. The rest of the frame includes the black bars of the window, the dark colors of the shark's body, and the dark green background of the open ocean. The tonal contrast here makes salient the red (danger, passion, power) of the shark's eyes and the yellow (joy, happiness) Flounder's body, underscoring the overall model of opposition between normal and monstrous that has been constructed in the scene.

The musical build-up and climax in this shot also suggest preferred meanings. Orchestral music is able to effectively add to the tension in the shot, as it does in many horror films. This type of music works well when there is a need to convey emotion and set a certain mood. Many people recognize the slow, musical build-up of strings or horns as a character approaches a window, for example, followed by a fierce musical climax as the monster's face appears on the other side. In this case, the slow, musical build-up leads to a climax in shot 21.

> *Shot 21: Medium-long shot, at eye level, from inside the ship looking 'over the shoulder' of Flounder as he looks up at the shark.*

In shot 20, a close-up of Flounder shows him turning toward the window. Then, in shot 21, he finally meets the shark face-to-face. The shot shows Flounder in the center, framed inside the shark's huge, open mouth while looking up at the shark in fear. In moving images, mental processes like fear may be realized through what is called a connected, transactive reaction (van Leeuwen 1996). A transactive reaction includes a reactor (the character looking), a vector (a kind of invisible line, like a character's gaze, that connects participants), and the phenomenon (what is being looked at). The connected transactive reaction is when both reactor and phenomenon appear in the same shot, as they do here. An eyeline vector runs from Flounder's eye to the shark's eye. Flounder's fear and terrified reaction are visible from the angle of

the shot as he confronts the shark for the first time. The connected, transactive reaction here is effective because the contrasting subjects that appear together in the frame exaggerate the distance between normal and monstrous.

The shot concludes with a musical burst timed to the moment when the shark's enormous mouth bites through the bars on the window and into the ship. Flounder screams, 'Shark! Shark! We're gonna die!' in shot 22, and this sets off a fast and destructive chase up until the final shots of the scene when Ariel and Flounder just manage to escape the shark.

One final point can be raised about the organization of the scene's micro-narrative. Taking the scene as a whole, *The Little Mermaid* contains a narrative structure that resembles a common variation on a generic plot structure of the horror genre. Carroll (1990) calls this common variation the 'discovery plot' structure, and it consists of the following stages: onset, discovery, and confrontation. Onset is the stage during which the presence of the monster is gradually established for the audience, while the characters in the story remain unaware. In *The Little Mermaid* scene, this is evident as the audience becomes aware of the shark's presence before Ariel and Flounder. First, the audience becomes aware of its shadow, and then the body of the shark. Meanwhile, Ariel and Flounder proceed with caution amidst 'disturbing effects', such as the false scare involving the skull and the strange sounds heard outside the ship. Carroll (1990: 100) explains:

> The onset of the creature, attended by mayhem or other disturbing effects, raises the question of whether the human characters in the story will be able to uncover the source, the identity and the nature of these untoward and perplexing happenings.

The uncovering of the source occurs in the second stage: the discovery stage. It is during this stage that the characters discover the existence of the monster. In this scene, Flounder turns toward a window in the ship to discover the shark peering down at him with an open mouth. The discovery leads to the third stage: confrontation. Carroll (1990: 102) says of this stage: 'Humanity marches out to meet its monster and the confrontation generally takes the form of a debacle'. Indeed, the confrontation stage in *The Little Mermaid* scene involves a chase characterized by several debacles. For example, during the chase: a) Ariel drops her bag while being pursued and must retreat to retrieve it; b) Flounder momentarily gets stuck in a porthole while trying to escape out of the ship; c) Flounder hits his head on the ship's mast and is knocked temporarily unconscious before being grabbed by Ariel just before the shark attacks; and, d) the shark gets stuck in an anchor ring allowing Flounder and Ariel to escape.

To sum up, I have considered three simultaneous strands of meaning—representation, orientation, and organization—in analyzing the discursive patterns that position the shark as monster. In terms of representation, rapid zooms, excited speech, shadows, and eerie musical sequences create the dark, ominous setting. The ship, with its vertical bars that frame Flounder, resembles a prison-like structure similar to the 'characters trapped in a room' element in horror films. The shark is initially represented as faceless and mysterious, then with monstrous features such as fang-like teeth and

bloodshot, menacing eyes. A connected transactive reaction segment allows for the reactor (Flounder) and the phenomenon (shark) to appear in the frame together, where differences in size and features reinforce the model of normal versus monstrous. Turning to orientation, close-up shots of Flounder looking into the camera with a frightened reaction 'demand' (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006) empathy with him, while the shark is more often portrayed without this type of imaginary contact in the form of an 'offer' (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). This illustrates how social relationships are enacted between viewer and a character, as the viewer is asked to enter into a relation with Flounder—a relation of shared fear of the shark. Before the confrontation with the shark, the viewing audience is 'in on' the danger, while Flounder remains unaware of being stalked by the shark. Finally, as for the organization metafunction, shadows and salience (the size of the faceless shark in the frame) add to the anticipation and tension before the shark's appearance, which first occurs from the right side of the frame, signaling new information for the audience to note. The organization of the entire scene's micro-narrative follows the familiar stages of the horror film—onset, discovery, and confrontation—solidifying the establishment of the dominant representation of shark as monster.

3.2 Shark as Addict

Unflattering representations of the addict in popular culture have ultimately led to a fear that is deeply embedded in our social structures (Brown 2009: 175). As a result, the drug addict may be equally as frightening as the monster. In *Finding Nemo*, various filmic devices are used to construct this second pattern of representation. The second scene of the film contains a pair of back-to-back shots (at about the 6:35 timecode) that are telling in their depiction of the ocean and sharks. The pair of shots begins with Nemo's father preparing to accompany Nemo to school. It is the first day of school for Nemo and the first time for Nemo to leave the safety of his anemone home.

> *Shot 1: Close-up of Marlin and Nemo nestled in an anemone.*
>
> <div align="center">[...]</div>
>
> - <u>Marlin</u>: Now what's the one thing we have to remember about the ocean?
> - <u>Nemo</u>: It's not safe.
> - <u>Marlin</u>: That's my boy.
>
> <div align="center">[...]</div>
>
> *Shot 2: Long shot depicting Marlin and Nemo in their surroundings on their way to school.*
>
> - <u>Nemo</u>: Dad, maybe while I'm at school, I'll see a shark!
> - <u>Marlin</u>: I highly doubt that.
> - <u>Nemo</u>: Have you ever met a shark?
> - <u>Marlin</u>: No, and I don't plan to.

In the first shot, Marlin confirms and praises Nemo's understanding that the ocean is an unsafe environment. The second shot builds on the first in

identifying a specific type of danger in the unsafe environment: the shark. Marlin tells Nemo that he doesn't plan to ever meet a shark, because, it is assumed, he is very careful. He expects Nemo to be careful too, when Nemo goes to school for the first time. The two shots serve as an establishing conceptual shot that frames the ocean as an unsafe place where threats such as sharks may be hiding.

Later in the film, the first shark appears (at approximately the 18:35 timecode) while Marlin and Dory are searching for Nemo, who has gone missing. The shark's name is Bruce (a great white, who, interestingly, shares the same name as the mechanical great white shark in *Jaws*), and in the sequence that follows, Bruce convinces Marlin and Dory to accompany him to 'a little get-together' that will include two other sharks: Chum, a mako shark, and Anchor, a hammerhead shark. It turns out that this get-together is an addiction recovery meeting that the three sharks attend every week. The sharks are addicts, involved in an addiction recovery program to cure their addiction to 'mindless killing'.

Scene 1:

In the first scene, Marlin and Dory are searching for Nemo when they encounter a shark for the first time. A pan of accompaniment shot follows Marlin as he swims from left to right across the frame into the enormous figure of the shark, Bruce. The panning allows the image of Bruce to suddenly appear from the right and occupy the 'new' side of the frame when the two meet. As mentioned above, elements placed on the right signal something new to which the viewer should pay close attention—in this case the shark.

Marlin's fear upon seeing a shark for the first time is realized through a connected, transactive reactional process, an element mentioned previously. This time, however, the process involves a shot/reverse shot pattern of connected, transactive reactions. The first shot looks over Marlin's (reactor) 'shoulder' in the foreground up to an enormous figure of Bruce (phenomenon), with an open mouth displaying long, sharp teeth, in the background. Although we can't see his face, Marlin's body reacts with a frightened jump when the two meet. In the reverse shot, the camera looks over Bruce's 'shoulder', including the side of his open mouth and sharp teeth, down to the wide-eyed Marlin in the background. In this shot/reverse shot pattern, the use of the low angle shot on the shark makes him seem powerful and intimidating, while the high angle reverse shot looking down on Marlin suggests his insignificance and vulnerability.

At this point in the film, the representational potential of shark as monster may seem possible here too. However, a different reading is suggested after considering the behavior of Dory, the forgetful fish who accompanies Marlin in his search for Nemo. Dory does not orient to him as a threatening monster, as Marlin does. Instead, Dory immediately engages him in friendly conversation and happily accepts his invitation to the get-together. This way in which Dory orients to the shark suggests an alternative reading to the shark as monster representation. Instead, what begins to emerge is a representation of shark as addict. Consider the following shot from this scene: In a medium shot that looks 'over the shoulder' of Marlin and Dory, Bruce is swimming

away and sadly asks: 'It's alright, I understand. Why trust a shark, right?' At the moment Bruce finishes asking the question, he spins around quickly, swims back toward the camera and snaps his enormous jaw shut in front of Marlin and Dory, purposely scaring the two and adding doubt as to whether they should accept his invitation to the get-together. The shot ends on this close-up of Bruce laughing, seemingly at his own playfulness. Here, the uncertainty of Bruce's trustworthiness mirrors the stereotypes of the addict's untrustworthiness, or instability, that can be found in popular culture. Film, in particular, tends to associate characters who use illicit drugs with deviance or untrustworthiness (Cape 2003: 167).

Scene 2:

Earlier, I mentioned the importance of rhythmic cadences in a text. In scene two, a relevant series of concluding shots shows how the importance of rhythm can contribute to the emerging positioning of shark as addict. The beginning of this scene involves Bruce escorting Marlin and Dory to the get-together. As they approach, Bruce announces his arrival to Chum and Anchor (the mako and hammerhead sharks), who have been waiting for him. The conclusion of the scene contains five shots that rapidly alternate between the sharks and Marlin:

- *Shot 1*: Full to medium shot of Chum and Anchor, nervously bouncing off one another.
- *Shot 2*: Medium to close-up shot of Marlin being pushed forward by Bruce's fin.
- *Shot 3*: Medium to close-up shot of Chum and Anchor, nervously bouncing off one another.
- *Shot 4*: Close-up to extreme close-up of Marlin being pushed forward by Bruce's fin.
- *Shot 5*: Close-up to extreme close-up of Anchor slowly opening his mouth, until the entire screen is the black inside Anchor's mouth.

Shots 2 and 4 create the sense of Marlin approaching the camera, while shots 1, 3, and 5 create the sense of the camera moving closer to the sharks. The rhythmic alternation between the nervous and fidgety sharks and the frightened image of Marlin adds dramatic tension to their impending encounter and culminates when Anchor opens his mouth wide, the music reaches a climax, and the frame goes black. The precise editing of sound, movement, and music builds the tension in the scene and depicts Marlin as frightened and 'normal' vis-à-vis the sharks, whose nervous, fidgety behavior is emblematic of the addict trying to control an addiction.

Scenes 3, 4, 5:

Scenes three, four, and five can be discussed together. Scene three opens with the sound and image of a bell that signals the start of an addiction recovery meeting with Bruce at a podium (an old, rusted sink covered with algae). Bruce opens the meeting by leading the other sharks in a pledge: 'I am a nice shark, not a mindless eating machine'. After the pledge, Bruce introduces 'step

five' to the group. This is followed by a round of personal testimonies, during which we see an accusation of 'denial'. The meeting is cut short when Marlin notices a scuba mask caught on the outside of the ship. Marlin retrieves the mask in scene four, and accidently snaps Dory in the face with it, causing her to bleed. At the end of scene four, a close-up shot of Bruce's face shows the blood drifting up into his nose triggering what we recognize as the relapse. Scene five begins with Chum and Anchor screaming 'intervention', before a fierce chase with Bruce madly pursuing Marlin and Dory, while the other two sharks try to restrain Bruce by yelling, 'remember the steps....' These intertextual references—addiction recovery meetings, pledges, steps, personal testimonies, denials, relapses, and interventions—help solidify the positioning of shark as addict.

In addition, brilliantly detailed computer animation creates high degrees of modality in the backgrounds of the three scenes. Whitley (2008: 129) notes, in fact, that, 'no animator before Pixar had, to my knowledge, invested the underwater world with such loving and precise attention to detail as can be found in nearly every frame of *Finding Nemo*'. The location of the addiction recovery meeting, for example, is in an eerie underwater photorealistic minefield—what would be considered the margins of underwater society. Indeed, these realistic underwater realms tap into recurrent stereotypes associated with the addict and addiction in popular media and film, including the addict being represented as the 'other' in society (Huggins 2010: 386).

Like the recognizable micro-narrative in *The Little Mermaid* scene, the five-scene sequence in *Finding Nemo* also contains a recognizable narrative structure around which the drug addict—a familiar type of stock character found in Hollywood films—is constructed. The drug addict stock character, according to Brown (2009), usually takes one of three forms: the drug dealer-addict, the charismatic drug addict, or the anarchic drug addict. In this sequence's micro-narrative, the main shark, Bruce, comes to represent the charismatic drug addict type. The first time they meet, for example, we see Dory engaging in friendly conversation with Bruce. Bruce then invites Marlin and Dory to a get-together, which turns out to be an addiction recovery meeting. Bruce's charismatic qualities slowly fade, and are replaced by the characteristics of an uncontrollable addict, as Bruce experiences a relapse, loses control, and attacks Marlin and Dory at the get-together. Brown (2009: 178) explains that the charismatic addict types are able to convince others of their trustworthiness, after which 'the drug addict's charm dissolves and he becomes the clear instigator of the remainder of the downward spiral for the protagonist of the story'. This sequence, then, not only ascribes characteristics of the drug addict to sharks, but also creates the recognizable micro-narrative within which we recognize this representation.

In terms of representational meaning, then, visual and verbal semantic elements such as addiction recovery meetings, pledges, steps, personal testimonies, denials, relapses, and interventions are all ones we associate with the addict. Considering orientation, high degrees of modality bring to life the setting where the sharks hold their meetings—minefields and decrepit sunken ships—positioning them on the margins of underwater society, much like the stereotypical addict. A rapid series of five camera shots that jump back-and-forth between Marlin and the sharks complements the jumpy and nervous

behavior of the sharks just before their addiction recovery meeting. The series of shots also illustrates how distance is used to shift relations between viewer and characters. In this case, the viewer moves from a relation of shared uncertainty with Marlin regarding the shark's intentions to a sudden relation of shared fear of the three sharks. And finally, in terms of organization, a familiar micro-narrative—the addict establishing trust and then the addict breaking trust—provides the backdrop for the construction of a charismatic addict type of stock character, which is how the shark is positioned in this sequence.

In considering the above analysis of shark as monster and shark as addict, it would be useful to consider the metaphorical significance of such representations, as well. Indeed, there is a growing literature on multimodal metaphor and its potential for multimodality research and critical discourse analysis. Forceville (2009: 19) has noted, for example, that if it's true that we think metaphorically, as conceptual metaphor theory posits, then 'metaphor should manifest itself not just in language but also via other modes of communication, such as pictures, music, sound, and gestures'. In the two Disney films, this occurs as the source domains of sharks and addicts are triggered through multiple modes (i.e., sound, language, pictures) and in various combinations, as the metaphor is allowed to development over the course of the longer span of time that a feature film affords. A full discussion and metaphorical analysis is beyond the scope of this paper; however, it should be noted that multimodal metaphor offers promising avenues for future research.

4. Conclusion

Discourse is a powerful force that shapes a society's opinions, attitudes, understanding, and, ultimately, behaviour. Take the case of the shark as addict representation. Viewers of *Finding Nemo*, many of whom are children, most likely have had very little interaction with an addict and may be especially susceptible to the stereotypes associated with the addict: the addict as a threat, a criminal, a health risk, untrustworthy, abnormal, and representing the underbelly of society. When such stereotypes are then mapped onto sharks, the attitudes and behaviours behind children's—and a public's—misperception and persecution of sharks are reinforced by new generations.

At issue here too, I believe, is the education of children. Giroux (n.d.: par. 12) argues that

> the time has come to challenge Disney's self-proclaimed role as a medium of 'pure entertainment' and take seriously Disney's educational role in producing ideologically loaded fantasies aimed at teaching children selective roles, values, and cultural ideals.

Not only Disney, but also various other forms of popular entertainment need to be challenged. Much of what children learn about the marine environment does not come from classrooms in school, but from the scripted marine environments in media and popular culture.

Classrooms can, however, make a difference. Teachers can interrogate not only language, but also other modes of communication such as film. Teachers can challenge particular discursive representations and encourage the use of non-exploitative language by introducing counter-narratives, for example. These can be stories purposefully selected and/or crafted that communicate the devastating impact of human activity on marine ecologies, including shark populations, or stories in which sharks are portrayed more positively.

This type of resistance is important, as a growing number of scientists, policymakers, and environmentalists remind us that marine environments continue to change as a result of human activity. There is no doubt that conserving marine ecologies must be an important priority now, less our oceans become the deserted graveyards depicted in the horror films that keep us awake at night.

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