A CASE FOR THE ANIMATED DOCUMENTARY

by

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ABSTRACT

Animation and documentary appear as oxymoronic terms, one encompassing all that is fantastical and imagined while the other stands firm in reality and truth, but animated documentaries have been in existence since the early 20th Century. Until recently they have not been of interest to the public or critics. In an effort to validate animated documentaries as an art form and thus a genre for serious consideration, scholars are currently focusing on defining and categorizing animated documentaries. Unfortunately, this is resulting in overly restrictive boundaries that films must adhere to in order to fall into the animated documentary category. In this paper I argue for more encompassing definitions while questioning the need for validation. In a world where boundaries between man and woman, human and non-human, and natural and unnatural are breaking down, perhaps animated documentaries are an ideal representation of this emerging new world.

INTRODUCTION

Animated documentaries have been around since Winsor McCay's 1918 film *The Sinking of the Lusitania*, but they have not always garnered significant academic or public attention until recently with the emergence of *Chicago 10* (2007) by Brett Morgen, *Persepolis* (2007) by Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud, and *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) by Ari Folman. Animated documentary literature is sparse as it is such a new field of interest. There are only a handful of papers published on the topic, and even fewer chapters in books devoted to addressing it, though with the rising interest in the field this situation is beginning to change. Current literature in this field focuses heavily on legitimizing animated documentaries through definitions, attempting to determine what we should include and what we should exclude. This literary scholarship tends to fall into one of two camps. One camp speculates whether animated documentaries are a subcategory of documentary and thus require molding to fit into existing documentary modes. I discuss DelGuadio and Ward in relation to this topic later in the paper. Meanwhile, the other camp contemplates whether animated documentaries belong in completely new categories altogether, such as Roe's more embracing categories for animated documentaries.

To understand this desire to define and legitimize the animated documentary, we must recognize its standing in today's world and the journey it took to get here. A brief history of the animated documentary will enable us to better understand the definitions scholars are busy constructing, and why some feel we must construct more formidable structures as they classify more thoroughly. Some scholars attempt to squeeze animated

documentaries into existing categories, such as Nichols' modes of documentary found in his book *Representing Reality*. His modes provide a structure by which scholars can categorize documentary films as representing reality. Meanwhile, others create new categories for animated documentaries.

Though I agree with the need for definitions and categories, structure and organization, and a common terminology by which we can intelligently discuss a given topic especially in the case of animated documentaries, I do feel there is a point at which this exercise in boundary building verges on the obsessive and restricts our understanding and appreciation for both art and the world it describes to us. I wonder if we should take more care in setting restrictions, especially when it comes to animated documentaries. In a world where fact and fiction begin to intermingle and scientific discoveries begin to question categories once thought to be irrefutable perhaps animated documentaries are an ideal representation of this emerging new world. More importantly, perhaps animation should not be restricted for use, as one might imply from Roe's new categories, in situations in which live-action falls short. Perhaps ours is a world ripe for newly defined animated documentaries.

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

A retelling of animated documentary's history is not necessary to this paper and has been covered in a number of other papers, including Roe and DelGuadio. I do feel, however, a brief look at how we arrived at our current situation will prove useful to understanding why there is a need to validate the animated documentary and why scholars are currently focusing so intently on defining and categorizing this emerging genre.

Historically, animation has been employed in a number of areas, most notably children's entertainment, commercial advertising, propaganda and educational films. Of these, "A high majority of mass-media animation is aimed at children" (Wells, *Reimagining* 48). Animated images depict fairytale-like visions and aptly represent the fantasy worlds of children's fertile imaginations. These fantastical visions portray worlds so far removed from the real world and are first seen by many of us when we are children that the association between children's fantasy and animation is tightly bound. Meanwhile, animation directed at adults tends to fall into the category of sales, as commercial advertising or propaganda. This further establishes animation as a promoter of fiction or sales approaches rather than fact. As Wells points out, "Beyond children's television programming, the heaviest use of animation is […] in corporate advertising and promotion" (*Reimagining* 50). From Kellogg's Sugar Frosted Flakes' Tony the Tiger to the Pillsbury Dough Boy, animated commercials have instilled themselves in the fabric of our society (Solomon 253). Unfortunately, many viewers regard them as highly suspicious endeavors with untrustworthy salespeople pulling strings behind the scenes,

willing to say anything, no matter how far from the truth their claims may fall. Propaganda further adds to animation's perceived value in the realm of fiction and sales rather than that of fact. I consider propaganda a sales pitch for ideology, or as Pamela Johnson states, "art in the service of an idea or ideology" (5). As such it is part of the sales category and looked upon with suspicion, much like commercial advertising. It is often viewed as an attempt to portray a reality constructed by the biases of the producers, "the controlled transmission of one-sided messages", that often only represents truth marginally as it leaves half the story on the cutting room floor (Nelson 333). Animation is not as commonly used today for propaganda, but it provided a vital tool for films during both World Wars. Though Disney was one of the most prominent players, "most of Hollywood took to supporting the American patriotic efforts during the Second World War […] All the characters across the various [animation] studios appeared in some military content" (Raiti 155).

While children's entertainment, corporate advertising and propaganda all create a platform for animation consisting of fantasy and manipulation, educational films attempt to provide another platform - that of fact. Films utilizing animation for educational purposes are often fully animated and directed at school children or they consist of short animated segments contained in larger live-action documentary films for descriptive and explanatory purposes. There are also some fully animated educational films directed at adults. Many of these were produced during WWII when animation studios were cranking out training films for soldiers (Solomon 113- 123).

Unfortunately, animated educational films have had little significant impact on our views of animation as a viable provider of truth. The perceived view of animation as a vehicle for fantasy and not fact has been prominent for many years. Vivian and Thomas Sobchack state that:

> Along with animals who have been anthropomorphized, the films begin to feature human characters who are meant to seem real and who, thus, seem to function in a less imaginative sphere and according to more comprehensible physical logic than the liberated animal characters of the cartoon short. Despite this urge toward greater realism, however, the animated cartoon – no matter how narratively logical or how anthropomorphic – is drawn, and so it is patently unreal" (406).

They also contend that "animation is removed from reality, since the figures are drawn and not photographed. Couple this with animation's penchant for the fantastic transformation of space and matter, and you have a form which is closer to the abstract film than to the documentary" (401). For the animated documentary to be taken seriously as a valid factual communications medium, it is vital to prove the legitimacy of animation as a tool for representing reality. The need to legitimize animated documentaries could be considered a mere academic argument, but even today this bias affects filmmakers. Any filmmaker interested in creating an animated documentary has the difficult task of showing that animation can contain truth and depict reality when for so long we have linked it to distrust and un-reality.

Ari Folman, the creator of *Waltz with Bashir,* has helped pave the way for other documentary filmmakers who use animation to convey their ideas, but when making his film, he had great difficulties convincing funders of the validity of his project. In a post-viewing interview provided as a special feature on the film's DVD, Folman states:

> When I tried to raise money for this film I went to documentary funds and they told me, 'Listen, if it's animated it can't be documentary, you know, it doesn't work together. So go to animation funds.' I went to animation they told me, 'If it's documentary it's not animated go back to the documentary.' And I was kind of stuck in the middle for a long time. And I had to take many personal risks in order to finance the film. (Folman)

Thus, validating animated documentaries whether by defining and categorizing them or by other means is in the interest of filmmakers and scholars alike.

DEFINITIONS

Defining Reality

Before attempting to construct a definition for the animated documentary, we must first determine how we define the real, reality and realism. For the purposes of this paper I define the real world as the place in which we live, but we are unable to see it. We can only see it as our reality. Reality is a construct, a mixing of the real with our own situated knowledge, concomitantly defined by both societal and personal biases. While the real is unknowable, we possess an intimate association with and knowledge of our individual realities. While real and reality are concepts that refer to the worlds we live in, realism is a group of stylistic conventions, ever changing with our perception of the real and our constructed reality. It provides an illusion of replicating (rather than constructing) reality and it is a manner in which we attempt to portray the real through art. It is the foundation upon which documentarists build credibility for the reality they portray in their work. My views, in a limited way, are similar to those of the philosopher Willard van Orman Quine as summarized by Gary Hardcastle, "Even non-individuated stuff like water and red is a construct upon experience, or more properly, a conspiracy of experience and our proclivity to sense similarities across experience" (600).

Defining Documentary

As I believe our world is a construct, or at least the reality that is our world is a construct, then documentary becomes a construct of a construct. As a result, documentary

filmmakers work in a reality two or more layers removed from the subject they seek to accurately depict. Some documentary scholars say, "there is no such thing as documentary" and "the documentary is no more realistic than the feature film" (Minh-ha 90; Alexander Kluge qtd. in Minh-ha 98). Others claim there is a hint of truth, an ever-elusive trace of reality that exists in every piece of work we create from fiction to non-fiction. As Nichols states, "Even the most whimsical of fictions gives evidence of the culture that produced it" (*Introduction* 1). My desire to embrace less restrictive definitions of documentary and potentially throw out definitions altogether tempts me to include fiction films. I will resist this temptation and rather state that if the creator of a film deems it a documentary, then it is such, whether critics from their situated realities believe the artist accurately portrays reality. I therefore choose to define documentary in much the same manner as Annabelle Honess Roe defines animated documentaries. A film is a documentary if it "is about *the* world rather than *a* world wholly imagined by its creator," and it, "has been presented as a documentary by its producers and/or received as a documentary by audiences, festivals, or critics" (Roe 3). A documentary is simply the stated attempt by a filmmaker to represent the real through art, though the endeavor often falls far short as the filmmaker in actuality only captures the real as she knows it. This definition includes all animated, reenacted, performative and narrative works as long as the filmmaker determines the film to document a reality she is familiar with regardless of the style with which it is presented. Thus, by my definition, a documentary is largely defined by the filmmaker and is more often a reality of the filmmaker than that of the documentary's subject(s) or of the audience.

Defining Animation

Unlike documentary, animation is not a genre we discuss frequently. Though we do enjoy illicit riflings through its nostalgia inducing contents, we otherwise prefer to relegate it to child's play, "innocuous and juvenile" (Wells, *Reimagining* 48). Change begins to stir though as contemporary scholars apply relevance to animation in today's society and begin to probe animation's depths, analyzing the potential for assigning implications. Charles Solomon defines animation in the introduction to his book as images, "recorded on film frame by frame," and motions that "exist only on film." Meanwhile, Norman McLaren makes the alluring statement that animation is, "not the art of drawings that move but the art of movements that are drawn" (qtd. in Furniss 5).

I am particularly drawn to McLaren's poetic viewpoint in its simplicity and unconstrained air, though I do feel it needs further clarification. Like McLaren, I consider hand-drawn movement an important type of animation, but I also include in my definition all painting, sculpture, stop-motion, computer generated images, 3-D, and hand-drawn cel animation which simulate movement. I exclude all human live-action from my definition and any manipulation of live-action in which the final film depends upon the live-action footage for the effects to exist.

Defining Animated Documentary

Though scholars in the fields of documentary and animation struggle with pinpointing exact definitions, those focusing their attentions on animated documentaries

have an added difficulty when attempting to create a definition for a product consisting of

two apparently disparate entities. Sybil DelGaudio states, "Since an animated film

'exists' only when it is projected [or viewed via electronic devices] – there is no pre-

existing reality, no pro-filmic event captured in its occurrence – its classification as

documentary can be problematic" (190). However while some scholars may view the task

of defining animated documentaries daunting, others find the exercise invigorating.

One such scholar is Annabelle Honess Roe. Though I previously quoted Roe

while defining documentaries, I will employ the full quote here as it references animated

documentaries more specifically than documentaries in general. Roe defines animated

documentaries in the following manner:

> I would suggest that an audiovisual work (produced digitally,
> filmed, or scratched on celluloid) could be considered an animated
> documentary if it: (i) has been recorded or created frame-by-frame;
> (ii) is about *the* world rather than *a* world wholly imagined by its
> creator; and (iii) has been presented as a documentary by its
> producers and/or received as a documentary by audiences,
> festivals, or critics. (3)

I find Roe's minimalist style appealing. Working off this definition I will tweak it ever so

slightly to better encompass my definitions of both animation and documentary. I would

therefore define an animated documentary as any animated movement as previously

defined under the animation heading above that a filmmaker states is an attempt to depict

the filmmaker's situated view of reality.

CATEGORIES

<u>Old Categories</u>

To further validate animated documentaries some scholars move beyond mere definitions in search of more formidable organizational structures. When a new art form emerges one of the first considerations is whether the new art form fits into an old category or whether it requires a new category altogether. With regard to animation, scholars have attempted and continue to attempt both avenues. Sybil DelGuadio attempts to fit animated documentary into Nichols' existing categories. She chooses the reflexive mode as her category of choice, though even she admits the fit is a bit tight. She defines the reflexive documentary as arising:

> …from the desire to 'challenge the impression of reality which the other three modes normally conveyed unproblematically.' As the most 'self-aware' of the four modes, the reflexive mode utilizes the devices of other documentaries, foregrounding such devices in an effort to emphasize them as well as the effects that they might achieve. Reflexive documentaries such as Errol Morris' *The Thin Blue Line* and Dziga Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929) constantly question the fabricated nature of the image as a mere function of the text itself. (189)

DelGuadio claims most animation in and of itself is a reflexive endeavor, regardless of whether a documentary's content is reflexive. This is because the use of animation as a style, an entirely constructed artifice, forces a filmmaker to recognize the constructed nature of a film and thus any animated documentary film is reflexive in its own right. On the surface this appears a logical place to put animated documentaries, but even DelGuadio notes that not all animated documentaries may fall into this category

stating, "the reflexive mode seems a particularly appropriate mode in which to situate certain animated films" (192).

Creature Comforts (1989) by Nick Park is a good example of an animation style of documentary that fits easily into the reflexive category. The film depicts animals in a zoo describing their thoughts on life in captivity. The animation/claymation is based on random audio interviews performed in the United Kingdom for which the creators chose to use animals to represent their human subjects, a very reflexive maneuver reflecting the feeling of being trapped in the world we live in, a common theme in the interviews.

A film such as *Waltz with Bashir,* however, does not appear to fit so easily into this category. It employs a realistic animation style that appears to attempt to hide the constructed nature of the animation, thus appearing to thwart the idea of reflexivity. Reflexivity is dependent upon an awareness of film's constructed nature. *Waltz with Bashir,* though an animation, is attempting to come as close to depicting the real as animation can come. It attempts to mimic as closely as possible the reality it seeks to accurately depict instead of acknowledging animation's part in creating a reality onscreen. This could be likened to an artist painting a portrait. If the painter considers how closely the paint represents the person's skin tone rather than what a specific color might imply about the subject, or focuses on how accurately the hand in the painting reflects the position of the subject's hand in reality rather than whether a slight change in the hand's shape adds insight to the subject's personality, then I believe this is not a reflexive painting. Even though the artist paints the portrait and does not photograph the subject, this does not immediately imply reflexivity. Painting the portrait becomes a skill,

a mental exercise, not a reflexive consideration. Despite this, *Waltz with Bashir* could fall

into Nichols' reflexive category based not on the animated style but rather on the nature

of the content, which explores the vagaries of memory in times of war. If instead of war

memories, the film sought to provide an accurate textbook-style, non-reflexive, historical

recounting of the Lebanon war and if the animation style remained as realistic as it

stands, *Waltz with Bashir* would no longer fit in the reflexive category. Another example

is the film *Chicago 10* in which motion capture animation produces an incredibly realistic

appearance. This animation style requires the filming of a live-action sequence.

Computer software then creates animated images from the live-action footage, much like

rotoscoping, which uses hand-drawn images rather than computer-generated images. The

content for the film's animation is the reenactment of a trial hearing from transcripts

resulting in a film in which neither the content nor the animation style is reflexive.

Paul Ward makes a case for Nichols' interactive mode in his book *Documentary:*

The Margins of Reality. He points to the film *A is for Autism* (1992) by Tim Webb. Webb

interviews children and adults with autism, using their voices as narration over animated

images. Ward makes the case that Webb is interacting with his subjects by animating

pictures drawn by the children he interviews (Ward 93-96). *Waltz with Bashir* could also

potentially fall into this category since many of the film's subjects not only participated

in interviews but also acted out a number of the sequences that artists later animated.

Interactive films engage the subjects more directly in the filmmaking process. Though

some films may embrace the involvement of their subjects, this mode is more the

exception than the rule for many animated documentaries. Films such as *The Sinking of*

the Lusitania, which depicts the sinking of the British ocean liner, Lusitania, by Germans during World War I and the subsequent death of many of its passengers, would not fall into this category as there is no interaction between the subjects (the ocean liner and passengers) and the filmmaker. Unlike *The Sinking of the Lusitania,* many documentary films include discussions with the film's subjects. If a filmmaker does not attempt to involve the subjects in the process of filmmaking outside typical expository interview sessions, the film does not fit into the interactive mode. This prevents it from being an ideal category into which we can squeeze all, or even most, animated documentaries.

Paul Ward later wrote the paper, *Animating with Facts: The Performative Process of Documentary Animation in the ten mark* in which he attempts to fit animated documentaries into Nichols' performative mode. Finding the mode too restrictive since it "is predicated on being 'unscripted and unrehearsed'" Ward redefines this mode to better fit animation's tendency towards being wholly scripted and rehearsed (5). This then begs the question: if the old categories don't fit as they stand, should we continually rework them, stretching them until they become a mere ghost of their former shape or should we build new ones instead? Some scholars have taken the latter approach. Instead of trying to make animated documentaries fit into old categories, they are busy building new categories for animated documentaries.

<u>New Categories</u>

Anabelle Honess Roe suggests new categories for animated documentaries claiming "that animation functions in three key ways: mimetic substitution, non-mimetic

substitution and evocation" (14). The refreshing aspect to Roe's approach is that instead

of attempting to fit animated documentaries into a preexisting documentary category, she

creates new categories seeking to identify ways in which animated documentaries enrich

our understanding of a subject and opportunities for animation to shine where live-action

falls short. Roe describes her substitution category as animation that "illustrates

something that would be very hard, or impossible, to show with the conventional live-

action alternative and often it is directly standing in for live-action footage" (12). She

then divides substitution into two categories, mimetic, which, "attempts to mimic the

look of reality," and non-mimetic, which is not a direct substitute, rather it is an object or

event, "loosely interpreted through animated visuals […] There is no sense of trying to

create an illusion of a filmed image" (12). Roe suggests that when live-action footage is

unavailable or when a subject requires anonymity animation can be an adequate and

sometimes preferable substitute for live-action providing insight into a character that live-

action may not be able to provide. *Waltz with Bashir* would readily fit her mimetic

substitution category in that it attempts to mimic the look of reality while providing a

means of telling a story that lacks live-action footage. On the other hand, *Silence* (1998)

by Orly Yadin and Sylvie Bringas is a film depicting the memories of a Holocaust

survivor's experience as a child. The film falls easily into Roe's non-mimetic substitution

category as it uses animation in place of nonexistent live-action footage, but it does not

attempt to mimic the look of the real. The film begins with spare black and white

woodcut images depicting a foreboding homeland. Figures emerge from the blackness

only to fade away again, ghostly apparitions that float through the abyss more dreamlike

than lifelike. After the war the images, though still spare, become brightly colored watercolor paintings representing a happier time, or perhaps a time that appears superficially happy, the colors merely hiding dark undercurrents. Throughout the film the surreal animation style, whether woodcut or watercolor, does not attempt to portray tangible reality, but rather the intangible emotions that surround the terrifying and confusing experience of a young Jewish girl living in Germany during World War II.

Roe's final category is evocation in which animation can be used to convey, "concepts, emotions, feelings and states of mind […] particularly difficult to represent through live-action imagery" (13). In this case animation can give life to the intangible aspects of life. It can be an ideal medium to express emotions, dreams and memories. *Moonbird Storyboard* (1959) by Faith and John Hubley is an example of Roe's evocation category. Faith and John Hubley recorded their children in their bedrooms after the lights went out and proceeded to animate the young boys' nighttime escapades. The surreal images they created are a perfect depiction of a child's fertile imagination.

Roe's categories are far more enticing than Nichols', but unfortunately they still prove restrictive, in that any animated documentary falling outside these categories must still defend itself as an appropriate means of representing reality.

ANIMATED DOCUMENTARIES AND THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

As Baudrillard so aptly pointed out:

In order for ethnology to live, its object must die; by dying, the object takes its revenge for being 'discovered' and with its death defies the science that wants to grasp it. Doesn't all science live on this paradoxical slope to which it is doomed by the evanescence of its object in its very apprehension, and by the pitiless reversal that the dead object exerts on it? Like Orpheus, it always turns around too soon, and, like Eurydice, its object falls back into Hades." (7)

By organizing and defining we think we will then grasp the true meaning of the world around us, but in effect we end up pushing ourselves further from understanding with each attempt at meaning. Despite our inability to truly grasp the real meaning of a subject through incessant organizational systems, we continue to define, categorize and organize. We do not limit ourselves to categorizing art. We like our lives to be neat and tidy, an impulse that extends to our homes, our offices, and our relationships. Cooking utensils belong in the kitchen. The bedroom is for sleeping. The dog does not belong on the couch. The cat cannot exit the front door. The alarm clock rings at 6 AM. The shower water becomes warm after three minutes at high pressure. This provides us with a stable refuge from the chaos of the world around us. But this safety comes at a price. We erect walls and boundaries, unnatural divisions in life, in work, in love, and between people, places and things. We tend to draw lines between natural and unnatural. We separate men from women, black from white, and human from nonhuman.

Just because I fight against the inflexible walls of my prison at the end of winter does not mean I don't recognize their importance, and to discuss a topic we must know that topic; we must provide it with a name, a set of circumstances, and parameters in

which it exists, only then can we intelligently converse on a topic. As Carl Plantinga argues, "Characterizing nonfiction film, when properly approached, is indispensable," and that we can only discuss issues when we've, "come to a mutual agreement about what nonfiction films are" (7). Similarly, Ward states that "it is only by referring to them [categorical terms for documentaries] as a starting point that we can have any meaningful dialogue" (*Documentary* 13).

This falls in line with the belief that language determines us and that language in essence creates the world within which we exist. As structuralist and poststructuralist scholars claim, we cannot know the world without first having language to describe it to us. Benjamin Whorf states that:

> [F]orms of a person's thoughts are controlled by inexorable laws of pattern of which he is unconscious. His thinking itself is in a language – in English, in Sanskrit, in Chinese. And every language is a vast pattern system, different from others, in which are culturally ordained the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyzes nature, notices or neglects types of relationships and phenomena, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness. (252)

We build our world through the constructs of our language, and therefore in order to understand film, we must first have an agreed upon and universally understood vocabulary. As seen in the definitions and categories described earlier in this paper, language can impinge and bind the very creative processes it seeks to understand.

Luckily, the boundaries and definitions we have constructed are beginning to blur. Even humans cannot escape this messy reorganization. According to Haraway, the faulty boundaries previously defined for humans did not include the other organisms we carry. She contends that science has found that only 10% of our cells contain human DNA

while the remaining 90% of the cells in and on our body contain DNA representing the microscopic creatures, "bacteria, fungi, protists, and such some of which play in a symphony necessary to my being alive at all and some of which are hitching a ride and doing the rest of me, of us, no harm" (*Species* 3-4). What then separates us from them? It seems we are the alien matter and our hitchhikers are human. When a human being is already 90% microbes, add to that transplanted organs, artificial limbs, breast implants, botox enhanced lips, hair plugs, and nose jobs, it is difficult to discern what exactly constitutes a human. Even the Olympic Games appear confused on this topic as they disqualify Oscar Pistorius for not being human enough. As an amputee with artificial limbs he outruns "real" humans and is thus unwelcome in our Grecian games promoting god-like physiques. Even corporations pull up a seat at the table, attempting for their own purposes to blur the division between human and corporate entities.

Boundaries between man and woman break down. Women continue to enter areas previously dominated by men and stay at home dads grow ever more prominent. Women wear men's clothing and men wear women's clothing. Men and women hovering between the sexes since birth stand proud as androgyny and sexual reconstructive surgeries become more acceptable and individuals are no longer forced to live with the sex they were born with or even choose among sexual stereotypes. Add to this the breakdown in life physically lived and replaced by a life mentally experienced, as the barriers between man and machine redefine themselves, as we live life through our relationships on Facebook, our tweets on Twitter and our avatar on Second Life. We now live in a world where established ways of life are breaking down and new glorified

models rise in their place. As Turkel states, "Many of the institutions that used to bring people together – a main street, a union hall, a town meeting – no longer work as before. Many people spend most of their day alone at the screen of a television or a computer. Meanwhile, social beings that we are, we are trying to retribalize" (178). Now Google is coming out with new spectacles that allow consumers to wear their augmented reality glasses anywhere, while shopping, while working, in bed, at the movies, or on a date. There will no longer be a need to remain confined to sitting at a computer completely separated from the world around us. Consumers will be able view the world around them through computer generated images displayed by their eyeglasses. These issues raise the question of whether we are more human than microbe or more machine than human:

> Images of machines have come ever closer to images of people, as images of people have come ever closer to images of machines. Experts tell us that we may read our emotion through brain scans, modify our minds through reprogramming, and attribute significant elements of personality to our genetic code. Chic lifestyle catalogues of mail-order merchandise carry mind-altering equipment including goggles, headphones, and helmets that promise everything from relaxation to enhanced learning if we plug ourselves into them. Their message is that we are so much like machines that we can simply extend through cyborg couplings with them. (Turkle 177)

Perhaps animated documentaries are better at defining today's life than previously allowed. Paul Wells suggests, "Animation and design have become the natural state of artifice that we exist within" (*Reimagining* 94). In a world where photoshopped images are considered reality, where we invent alter egos to interface with the alter egos of others in cyberspace, where the idealized human form is becoming less and less natural, where boundaries grow ever more blurred, animation is an ideal means by which to accurately represent a situated reality encompassing a reconstructed and self-designed world.

We are calling into question the boundaries all around us. We can no longer even say with certainty what is human and what is nonhuman. While live-action can portray the face of a patient who has undergone a surgical transplant, animation can capture the complicated feelings of fear and relief. It can reflect the broken boundaries of a body where the body is no longer fully human, where something foreign keeps the body alive. While live-action can capture and display a world populated by sedentary bodies plugged into glowing electronics, animation can more accurately represent our attempts to "retribalize" through animated worlds in cyberspace. While live-action can show a supermodel walking down the catwalk, animation can take the photoshopped image of the same model and make it strut on the runway. Thus, animation can not only describe our emotions and feelings better, it can better define the breaking down of barriers in our world. It can explore the increasingly animated life in cyberspace many choose to live, and it can take the images we are most familiar with, images with no referent in the real world and make them move. Because of this, I feel animation no longer needs defining or categorization for validation purposes.

CONCLUSION

Definitions and categories are necessary and helpful in facilitating our understanding of how animated documentaries function and where their place is among more conventional styles of documentary storytelling. However, there is the risk of building a "prison-house" for documentaries with the implication that only documentaries falling into these categories can be animated.

Animated documentary has always had to answer the question that live-action film never encounters: "Why animation?" The implication being that live-action is objective truth while animation is only capable of portraying a construct of the truth and thus only valid in circumstances arising when live-action is unable to provide adequate evidence. Forcing animated documentaries into categories, even categories as well thought out as Roe's, may in the end restrict animation's use to specific situations, running the risk of compelling filmmakers to defend their films when they wander outside these borders.

If we recognize our world as a world in constant flux, and that our understanding of the world is continually evolving, we might realize animated documentaries are an ideal means of depicting this fluidity. While a photographic image is able to capture a moment in time, it loses everything outside its frame. It is unable to capture the intangibles of life, whereas animation has the capability to include the intangibles that tend to frame reality. Perhaps once we realize this, all we will need is a definition for animated documentaries that allows freedom of movement while providing validity to a style once deemed incapable of portraying reality. It needs to embrace the unique

qualities of animation that set it apart from live-action while not restricting its use.

Perhaps, ours is a world waiting for animation to describe its many complexities.

From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary lines,
Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,
Listening to others, considering well what they say,
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,
Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the holds that would hold me.
                                                          -Walt Whitman

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